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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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MOST of the following Sermons are printed nearly verbatim as they were preached in the Chapel-Royal; but the rest having undergone considerable alteration, the Author did not think it proper to notify them *all*, in the title-page, as preached in the Chapel-Royal; but what was not addressed from the pulpit to the hearer, is now addressed to the reader. The choice of the discourses, and the alterations in them, were in consequence of the Author's wish to render a publication (which had probably never taken place, but from circumstances which bear no relation to it) as useful as he was able to make it, amidst engagements unfavourable to the production of such designs, and even of such revisions as are due to the respectable persons, who by their subscription to these Sermons, are entitled to the Author's most lasting gratitude, and will stimulate him to such *future* exertions, as may make some little recompense for the generosity of their *present* indulgence and patronage.

Kidderminster, May 20th, 1791.

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

P S A L M cxix. 59.

*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto
thy testimonies.*

Page.

5

S E R M O N II.

P S A L M cxix. 59.

*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto
thy testimonies.*

19

S E R M O N III.

H E B R E W S iii. 12.

*Take heed brethren, lest there be in any one of
you an evil heart of unbelief.*

40

VOL. I.

A

ii. C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N IV.

I JOHN V. 5.

*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he
that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.* Page.
60

S E R M O N V.

REVELATION iii. 20.

*Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any
man hear my voice, and open the door, I will
come in to him, and will sup with him, and
be with me.* 78

S E R M O N VI.

St. MARK viii. 38.

*Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and
of my words in this adulterous and sinful ge-
neration; of him also shall the Son of man be
ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his
Father with the holy angels.* 109

S E R M O N VII.

HEBREWS xii. 1, 2.

*Wherefore, seeing we also are encompassed about
with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay
aside every weight, and the sin which doth so
easily*

C O N T E N T S.

iii.

easily beset us: looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Page.

130

S E R M O N VIII.

St. MATTHEW xxii. 37, 38, 39, 40.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

150

S E R M O N IX.

St. MATTHEW xxii. 37, 38, 39, 40.

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169

iv. C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N X.

I PETER ii. 17.

*Honour all men: love the brotherhood: fear
God: honour the king.*

Page.

185

S E R M O N XI.

I PETER ii. 17.

*Honour all men: love the brotherhood: fear
God: honour the king.*

213

S E R M O N I.

P S A L M cxix. 59.

*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto
thy testimonies,*—*

A Practice that produces the conclusions which are founded upon the best experience; for they are then founded upon self-knowledge, and therefore upon facts the most easily seen in all their *circumstances*: it is then that a man learns his own good capacities, and what is amiss in him either by nature or by habit; and it is then that he is qualified with that knowledge, without which he cannot possibly accomplish the great end of his

* Or, according to the old translation,—*I called my own ways
to remembrance.*

temporal existence—his moral improvement. This only can be effected by means adapted to his peculiar dispositions, as every man is, more or less, an *original*: a man therefore cannot know himself too well. To attain this knowledge is one of the most necessary and difficult exercises of consideration; one of the most necessary—that we may *turn our feet unto the testimonies of the Lord*; and one of the most difficult—for when a man would judge himself, he undertakes a judicial office which is the most arduous of the kind; I mean when he would judge himself upon the extensive plan of the Psalmist, call his own ways to remembrance, and review, it is probable, a considerable part of his life.

The conscience is at hand to pronounce a ready sentence upon a *single* fact, and one may generally say that it doth its office well, and almost intuitively; therefore in this case consideration is not necessary; but sometimes (I need not enumerate instances) the conscience becomes callous by imperceptible degrees, and at length dwindles into an inefficient faculty, from having been over exercised, Occasionally therefore it behoves us to solicit
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the aid of the utmost consideration, to undertake the most searching review of our past ways; thus we shall retrieve the requisite tenderness of conscience, and before it is too late, make the requisite alterations in our conduct; for, as human creatures, we cannot be too intent upon this work, this *one thing most needful*.

But when a man would judge himself, he undertakes, as it has been observed, a judicial office which is the most arduous of the kind; for he must comprehend, survey, and censure a multiplicity of facts and circumstances; he is, at once, the criminal and the judge; he wants no advocateship, and yet will be apt to rush into this office, and into the *abuse* of it, largely bribed as he certainly will be by self-love, to sophisticate away the truth; to cheat himself with an illusory sentence; and, for the present satisfaction of a verdict in his favour, to plunge himself into that condemnation in a future state, which is most to be avoided.

But let not our imagination take fire at the greater evil, and carelessly injure the cause of religion: we are commenting upon a sentence

of the holy Psalmist, and must not forget that Christ had not then brought a future life and immortality to light. A virtuous conduct is, unquestionably, the best means of temporal good; and so the best reason of man has, at all times and every where, reported of virtue. The belief of God was peculiarly strong in his *chosen* people; the wisest men in all ages and nations entertained, if not in the same degree, the same belief; they also, generally, agreed that there was a *probability* of a future state of rewards and punishments; and that virtue, was the one mode of conduct most agreeable to the will of God: it was therefore an easy inference, and it was in fact *their* inference, that virtue was the safest conduct; that the will of God was to be the law of man; and that his interests were very properly intrusted to the superior wisdom, benevolence, and power of the Deity. Consideration therefore, as the necessary means of a virtuous conduct, stands upon the broadest and most solid ground of reason: but its use and importance must be most apparent to the christian; though, perhaps I should rather say, that the divine grace has given *him* the greatest

greatest encouragements to practise it, and at the same time addressed his fears with a declaration of the greatest penalties for the neglect of it.—But it may be proper, before we advance farther into this subject, to examine the nature of consideration itself.

We are in the habit of using the terms reason, imagination, passion; these are only different expressions of distinct operations in the same mind; it reasons, it fancies, and it feels; when it feels, it is, more or less, *impassioned*; when it reasons only, we say it *thinks* or *considers*; these are the *ordinary* conceptions, and I have now no concern with such as are merely *scholastic*. Consideration therefore seems the most dispassionate operation of the mind; it seems the purest act of the human understanding; it is (if on a subject like this, I may be permitted to solicit the aid of fancy) that pliant, expansive, and sea-like mirror, *the mind*, in its most perfect state of clearness and tranquillity; neither reflecting the motley images of a turbid fancy, or undulating, trembling, or tossing beneath the varying blasts of passion; it is the only treasury of pure knowledge; it is therefore our

eyesight in order to the course of action, and supplies the only measure of our imaginations, sentiments, and passions; it extends in man, as far as is requisite for the purposes of his existence, into the times past, present, and to come; it is a faculty that elevates him above, and distinguishes him from, the brute beast; it implies a choice of measures; it is meant to regulate, and most absolutely, every inferior faculty that appertains to him; it is that intelligent, that judicial power, which is designed to plan and methodise all his movements; more or less, to be ever acting, and to enable this rational free-agent to be capable of a virtuous conduct, and of acquiring, and indeed of *enjoying*, its glorious consequences; it is the habitude of mind that is the most godlike, and most superior to all the deceptions of fancy, and the disturbances of passion; it is, as it were, a ray of the divine power and wisdom; it is therefore the operation of mind most requisite in this state of trial, as a bulwark against the imaginations that undermine, and the passions that assault us; and it really includes the capacity of extracting more good out of this world, for the purposes I mean even

even of *present* enjoyments, than can be procured for us by the gross and unenlightened purveyance of the imagination and passions.

Therefore when the mind will not stand upon its guard, collect itself, pause, view, examine, survey, and dwell a due time upon this its prime operation; in other words, when it will not first *think* and *consider*, it becomes then, as it were, an irregular machine, in which its *worst* parts predominate, and eventually destroy it, through the prevalence of imagination and passion.

On the contrary, if this self-mover, the mind, acts considerately, and agreeably to the will of the supreme mind, it acts well, and *for ever* well; for it governs all the *inferior* movements: all is then harmony, and as much happiness is then produced as was intended for man. Death may destroy the material case that contains, or *suberves* this glorious machine (but which also confines it, and circumscribes its career), yet it still continues and improves, still working by the measures of reason, and of God, throughout a happy eternity.

Let a man live the life of mere passion, and he becomes miserable, and is, in fact, mad; let him surrender himself to his imagination, and he soon becomes the slave of his passions; for it is in the brambly wilds of the imaginations, that the more fierce, as well as venomous passions, are accustomed to harbour, and watch for their prey.

Moreover, when man is the mere creature of imagination and passion, he is in a state of blindness; he cannot trace the path of true happiness; he is continually stumbling, and at length falls *fatally*: for what can then preserve him from the last destruction? he is not governed by instinct; God in this respect is not his guide, but has created him a free-agent, and enabled him to be as happy as free, by the discretionary use of his reason: but reason is, as it were, the eye of the human mind, kept open by consideration only, and open in the proportion that man *considers*.

Therefore when the imagination, the passions, the rational faculties of man, are all concentrated upon the poorest and most perishable means of human enjoyment; in a few words,

words, when all is sensual appetite, gross avarice, and the like ; when the reason stoops under the imagination and the passions, descends to be *their* agent, and though ordained with monarchic faculties and preeminence, is however governed by these its plebeian minions—man then becomes a misgoverned machine, that rolls itself into destruction ; short and precipitate is its course ; it deviates from the *straight* road ; it is soon shattered to pieces ; there has been a strength to move, and no eyesight to guide.—This is the brief history of *inconsideration*.

But if man duly thinks before he feels, and reasons before he acts, he then expands himself into a capacity of discovering and receiving numberless pleasures, which had otherwise escaped him ; and is qualified, by the use of his only intellectual eyes, to take the only right course. He views, he compares, he calculates, he chuses his objects of pursuit, and, as far as he can, his sentiments of desire ; he is qualified to adapt exertions to their occasions ; he foresees good, and the means, when there are any, of obtaining it ; evil, and the means of avoiding, or lessening it ;
he

he prepares his principles and habits according to his best interests; he is still the master of his passions when he most chuses to indulge them (for they have their place in the process of human conduct), and is continually suppressing the outset of those passions which should never be indulged, and yet have their use, as the trial of our virtue. *He religiously meditates*, and by this act, draws the things future nearer to him; *he religiously meditates*, and rejoiceth, but chiefly in such things present as gratify the desires which shall be continued for ever. These appear to me the proper offices, and effects of consideration: I, of course, touch only upon the material points, as the subject is more extensive than my powers of discussing it.

But perfect thought, who can attain? Man is *long* the creature of accident, and a being whose habits depend upon others as much as himself. The habit of thought, and of varying it, and of its special directions, is peculiarly the work of education. Precious as the effects of religious consideration are, necessary as it may be for purposes the most important, it is seldom within our power till half
the

the tree of life is withered away : be it so—we have then no time to waste in idle lamentations, we have the greater call to *act* ; the noblest prize is still presented to our exertions, still within our reach ; it is a calm evening after a troublesome day, to be succeeded (the sleep of death is nothing) by the morning of a glorious resurrection.

This is the truth ; and therefore some have heretofore said, and some still say, let us sequester ourselves from every object that may in the least divert us from the practice of holy meditation : then, all *passion* they turn, as they fancy, to all *thought*, but it is, at best, a speculative idleness ; the gloomy prison of the monastic cloister, and the awful solitude of the desert, wretchedly seclude them from the joys and charities of society ; a mistaken piety to God absorbs all the duties owing to man : for God is a benevolent being, who created to communicate happiness, and not *exclusively* for his own glory ; though of course every thing created by HIM, must ultimately redound to it.

Were the review of our ways ever so difficult, ever so new, did it require much time for the purposes of recollection and judgment—

ment—surely the busiest man has one day in seven to call his own for this divine purpose: perish all worldly interests rather than that the holy Sabbath should be profaned by being *sighted*. Acts of virtue, which some times press suddenly upon practice, supersede (as it has been decided by an august and adequate authority) the ordinary use of this hallowed opportunity for religious recollection: but the prevailing neglect of the Sabbath, is one of the most lamentable evils under the sun; it is only not a *national* denial of God before men, it effectively says, *do not call your own ways to remembrance*, but crush into inexistence one of the best provisions divinely appointed man, *for turning his feet unto the testimonies of the Lord*.

All men have leisure enough for the requisite means of becoming good, if they want not the will to obey the laws of their Creator.

But I will suppose you determined to call your own ways to remembrance; and so tractable to the advice of the holy Psalmist, that this your resolution is so thoroughly fixed, that ye are only anxious how to bring it into practice: I therefore, finally, address you as
christians,

christians, as the disciples of that master, whose shoe-latchet the father of Solomon was not worthy to unloose.

Ye will pray to God for his assistant grace, promised to them who sincerely pray for it; ye will be animated by the recollection of his mercies through Christ Jesus; ye will think of the life and immortality which the universal Redeemer has brought to light, and purchased for the true penitent; ye will meditate upon his spotless example, and perfect laws; ye will then call your own ways to remembrance; ye will search out for this *hidden treasure* of self-knowledge (as the best means of your salvation) with *fear* and *trembling*; ye will *fear* the deceiving co-operation of your self-love, and ye will *tremble* not to hear and weigh the whole evidence with the most impartial and dispassionate attention; ye will summon the utmost efforts of your reason to pronounce upon yourselves that very sentence, which, were ye then to die, would probably be pronounced upon you by God himself; ye will not then omit your severest inspection into your habitual intentions and principles; but if satisfied with these, ye will not therefore rest

rest satisfied with your past conduct till ye have examined it by the *effects* of these intentions and principles; ye will particularly fix your observation upon your past *actions*, for these chiefly stamp your conduct either good or bad; ye will therefore survey, one by one, the different relations and offices which ye have been called upon to discharge, and then, but not till then, ye will become possessed of self-knowledge, and discover the whole truth: ye may probably be surpris'd at the discovery, but be it ever so displeasing, ever so alarming—ye ought not to despair; for what was ill in the time past, may be converted into more good for the time to come;* and by thus *calling your own ways to remembrance*, ye will henceforth have the power *to turn your feet unto the testimonies of the Lord*.

* Ο γάρ ἐστι χεῖριστον αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ παρεληλυθότος χρόνου, τῆτε πρὸς τὰ μέλλοντα βέλυσον ὑπάρχει.

Demosth. Κατὰ Φιλίπ. α.

S E R M O N II.

P S A L M CXIX. 59.

*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto
thy testimonies.*

TO make our ways the ways of *permanent* pleasantness, we must think on them; for we cannot be as happy as the divine benevolence intended us to be, unless we secure the prevalence of reason over passion; but this is secured (as we formerly proved) by the habits of consideration alone.

Let reason rule, or man be unhappy, seems the divine law; visibly so from apparent effects, where the passions entirely rule; and if it is not the *most miserable*, it is very far from a happy state, when a man is distracted between *two masters*: for reason, which cannot totally
be

be blotted out, mars and spots the tablet of human peace, if it is not made the broad ground upon which the passions are brought forwards. And we may add, that consideration become habitual, is as easy as any other habit: and perhaps it is true, and if so, especially merits observation, that a man of grave and considerate manners is with more difficulty drawn into an opposite state of mind, than a thoughtless person is into the mood of reflection and seriousness: and no wonder that this should be the general tendency of man; for reason is his distinguishing faculty, and consideration is reason in act.

The capability of being thoughtless, but shews man to be in a state of trial: yet although his attention is solicited by the myriads of motes that flutter in the sun-shine of worldly vanity, he has the power of withdrawing himself into the shade of consideration. It is under the misrule of the passions that we are degraded from the rank of human creatures, and divested of that image of God in which man was originally made.

That there is a great deal of misery in the world, is not plainer to be seen than its
cause

cause—inconsideration ; for the miserable are, in general, the victims of *hasty* imaginations, sentiments and passions : *oh ! that men would THINK on their ways*—is more and more the exclamation of every virtuous and wise man. For it is mental attention which enhances the relish of every thing that is good ; it is comprehensive observation which discovers the good that might have been unknown, unnoticed, and unpossessed ; and it is a faculty, purely *rational*, which detects the only means of acquiring the greatest blessings : but these are so many several offices of what we call—consideration. Let us make such an excursion into this subject as may bring into our full view the *general* excellency of this superior faculty, that we may be the more disposed to favour the *best* application of it, which is in the service of religion.

The inconsiderate live without design ; therefore the conduct of a thoughtless man, is as uncertain in its tenor, as the chaff caught up in a whirlwind ; it has no strength to advance in the one right course ; or it is as an arrow tossed into the air by the hand of a child, and not aimed at its mark from the string of the
VOL. I. C bowman :

bowman: but as the latter strengthens his power of archery by exercise, thus the mind itself is strengthened by its proper exercise, consideration.

Inconsideration is also marked by capriciousness, and not seldom, by a daring impetuosity; it may possess the gaiety of the moment, but it knows not the continuing, the improving pleasure of advancement in one pursuit; its delights are the flash of the meteor, and sometimes, alas! its most joyous movements, are as the rapidity and the lustre, the terrors and the destruction of the sulphureous lightning. For instance, the heart is jocund—company attracts—all the rich tissue of luxury is unfolded before the eyes of susceptible youth—wine inspires—the ordinary spirit of caution has vanished—it is a momentary madness—the spirit of adventure is now upon its summit—the work of avarice mingles with the fire of dissipation—and the cast of the dice strips the desperate gamester, it may be, of his whole patrimony; once perhaps the respected, and well-used property of a venerable and noble ancestry:—evils new, unexpected, ill-prepared for follow; wave after wave ruffles on, till
all

all the sea of his soul is in a storm of despair—and then the act of suicide finishes the story of inconsideration and irreligion.

Ye are the best judges whether this is the convenient fiction of an idle rhetoric (unbecoming this place) or a genuine picture of what is sometimes the truth; would to God it were altogether the former.—But let us relieve ourselves from this oppressive subject, by surveying the farther pleasures and profits of consideration.

We cannot make a proficiency in any science without consideration; great is the pleasure of such proficiency, and great in proportion to the excellency of its subject: but when that subject is human nature, the mind then gathers the topmost flower, or the richest fruit of knowledge; for this science (when we cultivate it for all its purposes, and discuss it in all its relations) involves *theology* itself.

But virtue, human manners, natural and revealed religion, God and a future state, are topics of thought that must so captivate, delight, and indeed exercise the reason, the fancy, and the passions of man, as to leave all others far, far behind them.

Such then (let us suppose) is the governing object of your pursuit; be it supposed also, that ye are enabled to persevere in it, with every advantage of leisure, inclination, understanding, and the other requisite means; and now consider what a field of observation, and what materials of superior delight are presented to you—to meet every form, and to satisfy every impulse of the capacious mind: for assuredly, this exalted direction of thought, impowers it, for its high and holy purpose, to trace all the golden veins of the purest poetry, eloquence, and history, human and divine: in the mean time almost all the living presentments of human occurrences afford it pleasing or profitable matter of speculation and improvement, whilst every useful, every noble art and science, in a word, the true philosophy, that moves experimentally, and lays open in a legitimate manner, the ways and works of God—but minister to it with the docility of handmaids—to borrow the apposite imagery of that comprehensive mind* which was destined to be the enlightener of all the coming ages. When I think of that piety which marked this father of the

* Lord Bacon.

sciences, and his greatest disciples, and then of the irreligion which deforms the scientific *under-workers* of the present day, I cannot but express myself in the following manner, upon a subject so interesting to the welfare of society.

Begin with morals, and through this medium look at things, and mounted upon the wings of virtue ye will ascend higher and higher towards *heaven*; but (to adapt words to ideas) *grub* downwards, thoughtless of God, and your peering intellect (however it *drudges*) will become a mole's eye; the sun-bright radiance of heavenly truth will more and more annoy it, and ye will dive deeper and deeper into darkness and the *earth*.

But, lastly, when a man, intent to think on his ways, and to turn his feet unto the testimonies of his Creator, looks into himself, conscious of his independent agency, and of the manageable materials which he has to form, and for what ends—virtue and its glorious rewards, he then, more especially, beholds the necessity, and the use, the force, and the rewards of *consideration*.

Therefore, men the most admirable in the faculties of intellect, have either entirely ap-

plied themselves to this science, or gloried to conclude their other respectable researches in this *crowning* pursuit.

He therefore who considers his own ways, and would employ all the means within his reach of mending them, is continually acquiring the very best knowledge by experimental investigation ; and is, at once, enriching his intellect, and in the most promising way to advance his personal happiness by the advancement of his virtue. He becomes his own best rewarder, and is in a very good sense of the old adage, *the fabricator of his own fortune* ; he opens within himself a source of far superior joys than what are derivable from things external ; and one may almost say without a figure (considering what men *usually* are), that it is *then* an ever-flowing spring fount out of a dry rock, or showers of manna falling upon a barren desert. If the mind purveys within itself for its principal pleasures, they are as boundless as the thoughts "*that travel through all eternity*:" * but if it descends to be a poor and passive pensioner

* Milton,

upon things external for its chief joys, it is then, comparatively speaking, penned in a pifold,* and one of the *number born only to consume the fruits of the earth*, the bounded and perishable earth. But I was attempting to describe the condition of the considerate man; of whom we may say, almost without a seeming paradox, that he is never *less alone than when alone*; for he is now qualified for a superior communion with God: in the mean time he stands the best chance of the purest earthly reputation; for he that is busied in considering his own ways, is so busied in his own affairs (*but yet in the one thing most needful*) that he is not at liberty to intermeddle, *improperly*, with his neighbour's concerns; he therefore becomes a quiet and orderly member of society; he cannot be otherwise, for the fact is, that he is become heavenly-minded, and is estranged from the little mean interests that render little minds pragmatical and mischievous. Magnanimity is the peculiar fruit of consideration; not indeed all the forms of it,

* Confin'd, and pester'd in this pifold here.

MILTON'S *Comus*, ver. 5.

but its best form, and that which has the least parade, and the most perpetuity. Therefore the considerate man becomes habitually mild, modest, and humble, mannerly and merciful; he cannot but become more and more happy, more and more wise, and good, and agreeable; he has wrung out of his heart the very last, and extreme roots of anger and contention, of envy, avarice, and worldly ambition; a broad impassive shield of holy recollection protects him from the darts of sensuality, or every form of meretricious voluptuousness steps aside out of his walk, in reverence to the sanctities of his character.

His proficiency in moral knowledge, is rather felt than observed by other men, and is therefore unenvied; and men are desirous of that society, by which they can best improve themselves in what all men are concerned, and seldom indisposed to make some proficiency; it is (as we have proved) the first branch of knowledge, and yet scarcely seems *any*; it is derived from the vastest, and the minutest sources, and yet there is little appearance of preceding industry and research; and whilst it really constitutes that knowledge

knowledge, which has been peculiarly called wisdom, it attracts not admiration, so much as esteem: but what men of this description, want of admiration, which is only a lure to draw enemies about them, and molest their quiet (*the chief good of every wise man*), is amply recompensed by a proportional increase of kind friends, whose affectionate esteem sheds the sunshine that gilds the long summer-day of his calm and temperate climate.

It is the first duty of man to be duly humiliated before God; holy consideration is the best means; and it is from the highest summit, of this the most exalted knowledge, that we take the most comprehensive view of human infirmity, and the divine perfection.

Yet he that thus abaseth himself, shall be exalted. But why do I thus express myself? he is already exalted; though humiliated, he is not *cast down*; something within him still whispers and says "*God is thy friend.*" Besides who sees not, that we are exalted above things created, in the proportion that we are *thus* abased beneath the Creator? hence our obedience to God is increased, and our advancement in wisdom made evident: the best and the wisest
men

men that have ever existed, have been the most humiliated before God. In fact, this sentiment of abasement is no other than the sentiment of a capable mind, outstretching itself into the utmost admiration of the utmost excellency; a sense of heavenly joy goes along with it: this is very visible in men who are pious in consequence of rational inference, or sober consideration. Therefore, although from the pliant powers of human nature, we become habitually familiarized to other movements of mind, yet it seems evident from fact, that the study of virtue and religion, when become *the* habit, is not only the most profitable, but the most *agreeable* employment of the mind: no one, as he becomes older, and approaches nigher to death, wishes to step out of this line; but the reverse is usually seen respecting every other:—the inference is obvious.

After all, religious consideration becomes that easy activity of mind, which affords a man the calmest enjoyment of himself, and the greatest ability to serve mankind. The display of the utmost intellectual powers upon an unimportant subject, is of less use to society than the example of one good man. By the former

former—attention is solicited to what does not merit it, the mere *manner*; and such is the multiplicity of books, that some of the first importance in matter, as well as of excellency in manner—must be neglected. There is a natural alliance between genius and truth; and honest purposes lash the former into its most victorious exertions: therefore writings the most productive of good to the whole human race, have been the fruits of religious meditation: they demolish sin (when they fall upon a tender, amiable, and ingenuous heart) like the subtle lightning, by a stroke that destroys, but does not torture; calamitous visitations from heaven, and adversities from *without*, wound, and agonize us into reformation.

Let us then commune in our chamber with God, and freely *chuse* his peace; let us be *still* in wise consideration, gently untwisting the knot of sin, and not desperately waiting till the chastisement of our heavenly Father may (as alas! it may not) rend, and wrench it from us, at the expence of our severest anguish. It is clearly religious consideration, that re-
leases

leaves us from the thralldom of this world, opens our prospects into heaven, and renders our tempers and conversation heavenly.

Hence, although on this side death the good man advances towards his goal with some human weakness—he still however walks *directly* towards it; he turns away from things perishable, and if he steps imperfectly (and how can *man* step otherwise?) yet he still steps, in comparison with *other* men, after an angelic manner: for we now discern in him the leading lines of his future and more perfect form; we trace the first hints and blushes of the glorious colours which shall anon bloom out upon him; and we already begin to perceive a little, what he shall become when he has been duly trained and fashioned in this life for futurity; when he has been, as it were, duly plumed by time for eternity; when he shall at length sum his celestial strength, expand his wings in all their purified splendor, and take his glorious and *glorifying* flight into the regions of the blest.

But this illustrative imagery is an inadequate conveyance of *my* conceptions, and doubtless, of *yours*—when we recollect the impressions made

made upon us by the heavenly conversation of the most virtuous persons that have fallen within our knowledge: all of them distinguished by piety, and the practice of holy meditation; serene, without coldness; humbly charitable; just, without rigour; gently firm; courteous and sociable, yet independent of the world; heavenly-minded, and yet cheerfully discharging every earthly duty; in short, such promising candidates for heaven, that the sight, the very recollection of such persons is an argument in favour of religion, which outshines the utmost splendor of persuasive eloquence, and is stronger than the whole accumulated strength of *verbal* demonstration.

Would a man become heavenly-minded, he must meditate upon heaven: and as surely as man dies, it behoves him to consider what may be his condition after death, and to prepare himself accordingly with the requisite manners and affections. Doth he rejoice in this life as his *whole*—his mind cannot have looked inwards upon itself, and perceived its capacities, its bearings, and heavenly aspirations.

Youth

Youth, health, and their accompanying good spirits, all the exhilarations of a pleasurable, affluent, and social life, with all the engagements of a busy and ambitious one—may for a time seem to make a man independent of religious consideration; but who sees not the *undistinguishing* havock of death, and doth not pity the many victims of this poor delusion?

In its greenest bloom, in its compactest and broadest expansion of strength, the oak itself is blasted by the stroke of the lightning, or levelled with the ground by the blow of the stormy wind.

Things present are, emphatically called by holy scripture, *the things of sight*; if ye therefore employ no address of reason to counteract their influence, ye are encircled, seized, possessed, and enslaved by them; for they are the nearest to the human soul, if it is left to itself; but it has an elastic force, and an imperial capability of dismissing them to a convenient distance: but however, the reasons that urge it to this exertion, are at no distance from the most ordinary apprehension; they press home upon every bosom; for who sees not the possessions of this life held by such a
tenure

tenure, that they scarcely deserve to be called possessions; who sees not that they are revocable, and sometimes revoked without a moment's warning by the Lord and dread proprietor of all things? are these then to be deemed *possessions*? we fancy them such, and act accordingly: this is too true, but it is equally true, that the children of fancy, are not the children of wisdom; for they act not upon the solid principles of reason; their reason has been a dormant faculty; they have not considered their ways, either the rectitude of them, or their tendency.

But fix the eye of reason, and its visual power is sharpened, it becomes considerative; it pierces through the mist of things temporal, and traverses the nothing-like medium; it glances across the gloomy valley of death, discovers, at last, those golden *gates of everlasting glory*, which glitter above the regions of time, and beyond those bright barriers transports its hopes of a property, which merits to be called genuine, because it shall last for ever, and to excite its utmost desires, because it is perfect *pleasure at the right hand of God.*

Upon

Upon this occasion it is enough to say, and it cannot be too often said to all mankind, that holy meditation is alone, that *heroic* force, armed by which, a *single* soul can rout the best-appointed armies of *the world, the flesh and the devil*.

Shall we then be inconsiderate, foresee nothing, be prepared for nothing—following our thoughts, as they accidentally arise in us, and not leading them, and bestowing them where we *judge* they may be best bestowed? shall we take no charge (to borrow the image of the sublime philosopher*) of this important *mirror*, the mind, but leave it unnoticed, to reflect whatever objects the rude occurrences of this life may *scatter* before it? no, in the name of God, let us not thus betray one of his most important trusts; rather let us conduct it with the holiest discretion; turn this mirror as much as may be from earth, from this passing pageantry, from this rude and heterogeneous scenery, and hold it directly towards those glorious and eternal heavens, where our last home is reserved for us, in the purer regions of the blest.

* Plato.

Wouldest thou then have all thy ways *establiſhed*, firm in habit, and conſiſtently right in tendency and principle, *ponder* (ſays Solomon) *the path of thy feet*: elſewhere this acute obſerver of human nature ſays, *the wicked man hardeneth his face, but as for the upright, he directeth his way.*

This picture (however few its ſtrokes) brings out the truth of nature, with precision and force: for it readily ſuggeſts the ſelf-encouraged effrontery of the *thoughtleſs* finner; his unbluſhing pride, his hardihood of front, his triumphant inſolence of wickedneſs; and exhibits him to the confiderate, the humane, and the religious obſerver, as a fool exulting upon his *grave*, or as a madman diſporting around the *tomb* which anon ſhall hold him.

But the good man—he *directeth his way*, and therefore *conſiders* it: though he too, being man, ſtill ſtandeth by his grave, yet being a *good* man, he borroweth thence his cautions, and not his fears; this life, he infers, is but his day of pilgrimage; this his preſent tenement, the world, but an inn; men, his cotemporaries, but his fellow-travellers for a ſhort ſtage; ſtill this tenement is enjoyed (it

is the gift of God), but with moderation; his brethren (for they are the children of God) are beloved by him as brethren; yet if they return not his brotherly love, but evil for good, he can then consider them but as fellow travellers for a short stage, and looks forwards to that angelic society to which he is *directing* his way. He directeth his way towards heaven; he *considers*, and therefore sees it; he advanceth with mild demeanour, modest caution, persevering patience, and relentless resolution; he therefore still advanceth, and turning neither to the right hand or the left, he grows strong upon his steps, and anon arrives at that point, for the securing which, it behoves us all, in good truth, to consider and direct our way.

Thus I have endeavoured to lay before you, in a manner, I trust, sufficiently interesting, the mother of all the virtues—
CONSIDERATION.

But were I, lastly, to enlarge upon the neglect which is *inflicted* upon her in this light and irreligious age; were I to contrast to her the wretched God of this world, all falshood and painted speciousness; were I to shew you
how

how much, and how fatally this idol attracts the general homage, the general *worship*; were I to paint in their genuine colours, and to mark with their due strength, the miserable consequences here and hereafter, of this stupid and impious idolatry, I should myself want consideration and its humanizing influence, if my language were not expressive of a soul agitated with shame, and grief, and horror.

Oh! then, thou God of all our mercies, vouchsafe unto us such a measure of thy holy spirit, that we, the heirs of immortality, and the disciples of thy blessed Son, may at length, *so call our ways to remembrance, as to turn our feet unto thy testimonies*, and accomplish thy gracious designs in our creation, sanctification, and redemption through Jesus Christ.

S E R M O N III.

H E B R E W S iii. 12.

Take heed brethren, lest there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief.

“**T**H E two great causes of the ruin of “ men, are infidelity and the want of consideration.”* Let us then follow the preceding discourses upon consideration, with some thoughts upon the subject of infidelity; and let us do this for the reason above-mentioned, and also from a sorrowful conviction that there is in these days peculiar cause to admonish one another, *lest there be in any one of us an evil heart of unbelief.* For whatever may be the prevailing opinions, principles, and professions, it is to

* Archbishop Tillotson. Serm. xiii.

be suspected, that the best of them have now so slight a hold upon the human heart, that they but constitute an inefficient theory; and that the worst passions of man are either *un-curbed* or encouraged by his principles. The sceptic, the decided infidel, and he whose profession of the christian faith is barely more than a profession, are not under the law of Christ, and afford not by their *works* any evidence of *faith*, but by them preclude its entrance into their souls, and are themselves subjected to *the God of this world*. Men are reprobable for sin, if they believe not in the truth, and they are equally so, if believing, they continue in sin; the former are impious, because they ought, and yet seek not to know the will of God; but the impiety of the latter consists in a disobedience to God, which is aggravated by the knowledge of his will. There is assuredly a degree of infidelity in the latter, for it is not conceivable that man in general is so abject a creature as to sin *habitually*, when he believes *thoroughly*; for then his faith is *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*; and the terrors, with the glories of futurity, are so

exposed to his view, that preferring earth to heaven, he turns from acknowledged beauty to deformity, and with a monstrous and unimaginable hardness of heart, advances with his eyes open towards hell. Man in general cannot be supposed capable of a conduct so inconsistent with common feelings and common sense. The sinner is the victim of inconsideration and infidelity; and an evil heart of unbelief surrounds him with that mist in which he walks among unseen perils. Therefore we have great cause *to exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**

The common talk of men upon the subject of unbelief is, that there can be no sin in it, because he that disbelieves, cannot but disbelieve; that belief or disbelief are not matters of choice; and that we can no more command the operations of mind in these respects, than we can force our eyes to see their present objects in whatever shape we please. The similitude is plausible, but very far from being that which the infidel, *so wise in his generation*, should use for his pernicious purpose. But

* Ep. Heb. iii. 13.

there

there is so much truth in it, that the intellectual eye may be fitly compared to the material in many respects : both must be fixed, and kept fixed for some time upon *certain* objects, for the thorough apprehension of them ; and there is a power in the will of man to remit, or increase the respective attention of each, and if he *remits* or *increases* in some important instances where he ought not, and is convinced that he ought not, he sins, and he suffers for his sin. Take the following instance, a man is necessitated to pass through some intricate and perilous place, he wants a guide, and a guide presents himself, and is rejected with contempt ; he needs the most vigilant exertion of his eye-sight, and yet is careless and inobservant ; what is the consequence ? he rushes into the haunt of the couchant tiger, into the bed of the venomous serpent, or is dashed into destruction from some unseen precipice : death is incurred, and surely sin preceded it. Is it sufficient to say for his justification, that he was obliged to see things as they are ? no, he had the power of shutting or opening his eyes, of remitting or increasing their attention, and of employing the eyes of

another person when his own were not sufficient to guide him—therefore *the fool perishes in his folly.*

But how much greater must be our guilt, when evidently wanting a guide *through this howling wilderness* of life, and naturally wishing for the best, we reject the *best* when he graciously presents himself to our service, and do this without bestowing the least examination into his powers and commission: God, I would say, commandeth us to fix all the eyes of our understanding upon these powers, and this commission; and we either turn away our attention from so important a proposal, or so lightly account of God, as to *scatter* upon it a regard the most inadequate and superficial for the apprehension of its nature and truth. Ye must either deny the existence of God, or deduce from the belief of it this inference, that it behoves man with relentless vigilance to look up to his Maker, for his instruction and law: for can we prove that HE who first gave us the light of reason, will afford us no other light? what know we of him and his ways, so as to be sure that he will not? and are we triumphantly certain that reason (from
its

its *apparent* works) is sufficient for all the purposes of human virtue and happiness? it was not thought so till the needed, and in truth the *solicited* light of revelation appeared: till then the brightest children of reason looked up to God, and yearned towards the common father for an additional instance of his nursing kindness. This has been afforded us in the gospel of Christ; therefore if the knowledge of its nature and truth is adapted to do us the utmost good, and preclude us from the utmost evil, infidelity is at least the most horrible form of *folly*; and that it is the greatest *impiety*, is as clear, inasmuch as it is the manifest and unquestioned duty of man, to search out the will of God, and to seek for it at all times, and every where, and beyond *every thing*. When a man *has* done this with the humility and candour, the patience and reverence befitting the pursuit, he may rest satisfied in his conduct, and I doubt not but that he will rejoice in his discoveries, and *hunger and thirst after* that form of *righteousness* which these discoveries will present to him. For as righteousness is the fruit of faith, so unrighteousness is, in general, the root of infidelity.

He

*He (saith our Saviour) that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God, and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.**

This appears to me a statement, which unaided by its divine authority, carries along with it its requisite evidence; such is its force of argument, and such is its apposite perspicuity of expression.—But that the infidel is *already* condemned (which he certainly ought not to be, if there is nothing wilful in his infidelity) may still farther appear from the following reflections.

This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.† In other words, this is the great design and will of God, that ye should have faith in Christ. But if man has no choice respecting faith, nothing on his

* John iii. 19. 20.

† John vi. 29.

part to do, to qualify himself for the reception of faith; here is supposed a purpose, a *work* (the expression is emphatical) of God which is vain. Ye may see it in another point of view; that we should have faith is not only the *work* of God, but his *command*, for *this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.** But if men have in themselves no *choice* as to faith, but are *passively* to receive it or not, as the looking-glass reflects what is presented to it, it seems that a vain *work and command* are ascribed to the Creator of man, who must know the capabilities of his creature. Holy scripture then asserts, that it is the duty of man to believe in Christ Jesus, and men themselves in *general* assert that this *cannot be the duty of man*, since he must believe as he sees cause.

Purposing hereafter to consider the *virtue* of faith, I shall in what follows of the present discourse, confine my observations to the sin of infidelity. Its general cause was sufficiently opened in that explication to Nicodemus, above-cited; and to manifest its truth to such

* 1 John iii. 23.

as have the misfortune to doubt it as well as its divine authority, I shall consider more particularly the causes of infidelity in the sceptic, who denies all truth, in the decided disbeliever of christian truth, and in the common mass of sinners who think not at all about the truth.

With regard to the sceptic who denies all truth, it seems to me not uncandid to make the following observations upon him.

The mass of men in all ages, and more especially the wiser and better part of them, have agreed that there is a God, in the well-known differences between right and wrong, the definitions of the virtues and vices, in the *expediency* of believing, and the *equity* of expecting a future state of rewards and punishments, and therefore in the *probability* that there will be such a state: but these deductions of mere reason, are supposed to have received at length their perfect confirmation by the religion of Christ. In the more civilized parts of the world the truth of this religion has been long and generally admitted. Such then is the desirable situation in which the modern sceptic finds his fellow creatures.

The

The larger part of them are called upon to *act*, but faith is the main finew of activity; men (all must own) are surrounded with temptations to sin, but faith supplies the best imaginable means for the repulse of these temptations; surely then it must be *an evil heart*, in good truth, a very cold and unkind one, that could urge a man to broach the tenets of scepticism, and thereby unsettle in mankind the belief of principles so assistant to their virtue, and so promotive of their peace and contentment. And must not that man have also a very *proud* heart who could readily acquiesce in the principles of scepticism? nothing methinks, but pride could prevent him from resisting the first assailance of such ideas, and from suspecting that then his intellect was weakened by being over-exercised, and broken by being over-strained. Such, were he not criminally proud, must upon this occasion be his conclusion, rather than that so many *believing* men, and nations, so numberless a *host*, had not a collective strength of reason to overmatch *his*; he would then modestly avoid a contest so unequal, and silently submit the opinions of *one*, to the majesty of such an opposing multitude, among whom

whom he would probably recollect *many an one*, against whose judgment he should blush to oppose his own. Truth is to be discovered, and knowledge to be advanced by the united and *harmonious* efforts of *all* men, and by the preservation of a certain equipoise between authority and self-confidence. Therefore when a man is *very* particular in his way of thinking, which may be and usually is a *disease* in his intellect, he will, if duly humble, suspect it to be such, and pray to the God of truth to heal his mind, with a pious confidence that his prayer will be heard. The pride of him who broaches the tenets of scepticism, seems unquestionable: but is this all? is there not a want of common humanity in this inattention to the consequences of *uttered* tenets? many a man strong in vicious passion, but weak and unexercised in intellect, may easily learn that certain men, reputedly wise, have reported that there is no criterion of truth, and however incapable of understanding the premises (worked out with all the tortuosities of a metaphysical brain), may *run and read* the conclusions; and from believing that he can know nothing, infer the propriety of doing every
every

every thing which he pleases. Though such an one cannot discern the intricate construction and labyrinthine wards of this lock, he will easily enough, when possessed of the key, employ it to open the door to all licentiousness.

Such men as think themselves called upon by their situations in society, to study the *effects* of books in life, as well as books themselves, have occasion often to shudder with horror; for often have they occasion to see the utmost wickedness arising from the tenets of the sceptical writer. If he possesses the requisite talents, let him employ them for the advancement or the rectification of the truth, and not for its destruction: if he acts otherwise we must take leave to ascribe his conduct to the worst form of *pride*, for it is the worst expression of impiety; and to the most barbarous *cruelty*, for it extends its ravages from generation to generation.

Respecting the decided infidel, the man assured that christianity is not founded in divine truth, it may be said that it is at least *probable* that his infidelity may be ascribed to his pride. The ready entertainment of principles contrary to such as have been in general adopted in
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all ages and nations, cannot but be considered as a symptom of pride; therefore if the decided disbeliever of christianity is either an atheist, or only so far a deist as to believe the existence of God, and yet deny his moral attributes and particular providence, he is certainly to be numbered among those who readily prefer their own opinion to the prevailing opinions of mankind; it is therefore probable that he is very self-opinionative: he cannot but own his system to be pernicious to society, should therefore wish it to be *false*, and will not be induced to publish it as *true*, but from a proud and inhuman inattention to mankind. But if he is that kind of deist who believes a future state of rewards and punishments, and adopts every rule of morality prescribed by christianity, he surely must admit that the authority of *mere men*, a Confucius, or a Socrates, cannot enforce such an excellent system upon the practice of all mankind, with the efficacious weight of *a divine revelation*; he will therefore wish for such a necessary accession of strength, and knowing what multitudes of nations through a long course of ages, and among them how many men of
prime

prime excellence in wisdom and virtue, have attested to their belief, by the most decisive proofs, of such a revelation—he will not heartily adopt or promulge any conceptions of his own mind, which are probably false, and certainly unfortunate for the welfare of mankind: I say the entertainment of such opinions rather bespeak his pride, much more if he avows them, and still more if his avowal insults the majesty of general opinions, not merely by a contradiction, but by the *vulgar* malice of a sneer, or the audacious insolence of a censure. These are not the methods of reason; they cannot *prove* any thing but the pride, and in the present instance, the impiety and inhumanity of those who *descend* to employ them.

Property secured, riches abounding, and every circumstance tempting to pleasure, seduce us naturally into the habits of luxury. The vices of sensuality must gain ground, and increase a disposition to oppose the religion of Christ. But surely if this abundance of temporal blessings naturally seduces the *inconsiderate* mind into infidelity, it is to the *considerate* mind the strongest argument against it.

It is to be observed too, that when all men read something they will be disposed to fancy they can *judge* every thing: in this state of things we expect, what we see, that men will be prouder, than there is cause, of their rational powers; therefore they will be apt to reject a divine revelation, or mould it into their own form, though at the expence of abolishing all the laws of grammar and logic, and rendering language itself incomprehensible. But as men are apt to be thus proud of their reason, and thus rash in the use of it, they cannot but be elated with its success in certain departments where it is qualified to work successfully: but then the minute adepts in this or that science, not *often* knowing the several natures of *each* science, or (what is the consequence of such knowledge) the grand relations subsisting between them, will want the proper rules by which they are to *judge* out of their habitual departments. He that has only used a telescope or an alembic, the scales or the compasses, in his search of truth, is ill-prepared to examine the moral dispensations of God, to apprehend and arrange the evidences of the christian religion. But it behoves

behoves all men very seriously to consider whether the art that instructs us in the moral duties of life, is not that art which merits the *utmost* attention of mankind; and whether the evidences of christianity are not just adapted to satisfy the *candid use* of reason, and to try, escape, and condemn the *uncandid abuse* of it. It surely cannot be doubted by any man, but that these evidences *merit*, as well as need to be collected with patient humility, and considerate diligence; to be weighed with the most dispassionate candour, and a disposition all along to surrender all our old principles and habits to the will of God, as fast as it is made known to us. But it is certain, that bad principles and habits preceding, will preclude a man from this *candid* investigation, and therefore from its consequence—*faith*. But if this is the general cause of infidelity, it is occasioned by a *voluntary* negligence, and we are answerable for it as the result of our own act. Light has come into the world, but we prefer darkness: God has said unto us, hear me, but we refuse, and *defy* him. Respecting the larger part of men, called christians, it appears that they have *an evil heart of unbelief*;

not surely from the want of means, but will to be established in the faith. They call themselves christians, it is true, perhaps think themselves such, and would be angry not to be so esteemed by other men; yet all the while they *act* as if they were not christians; mingle with a partial belief of the truth almost a total indifference to it; disgrace it by their conduct; harden the infidel in his unbelief, and more powerfully *undermine* christianity, than he *assaults* it. Grant that they believe it to contain the divine law of their conduct, yet being vicious, they are inconsiderate, and diverted from examining the nature, and learning the particulars of that law. This ignorance in union with the perverseness, boldness, and prejudices of vice, and a certain pride, too inherent in man, not easily to yield himself guilty of misconduct, readily tempts them, however believers of christianity in the *gross*, to disbelieve those its most important doctrines, which are meant to *try* the pride of man, to subjugate the vicious passions beneath the power of religion, instate God in his just empire over the human heart, and draw its chief current of desire towards him and his everlasting rewards.

Therefore

Therefore these *professed* servants of Christ, who yield the world their hearts, are but of his household to spoil it; the theory of their principles is shaped by the quality of their practices. Faith is not so much found on the earth, as it is often injured by seeming to be there, where it is not. For consider the great example of all righteousness, and his precepts, and then examine the general conduct of those who profess themselves his followers. But are they the followers of his piety, benevolence, and humility, his temperance, and his justice, his mild complacency, his disinterested prudence, his suffering meekness, and his magnanimous fortitude? The lord of this world is their effective leader, or why see we over their heads the display of *all* his banners? Is it consistent with a thorough faith in christianity, to be so fastened with desire upon the riches of this world, that this fordid passion holds the most of men in chains that eat the very soul with anxiety, or benumb it with cruelty, or debase it by fraud, or inflame it with anger? is envy a part of faith? does this discoverer of angelic virtues, and a heavenly society in the regions of eternity,

allow a place for such a passion in the soul of its genuine votary? or is it consistent with faith to shrink up the soul into the mere desire of perishable pleasures, and can faith permit it to wallow in those sensual joys, and to be steeped in those meaner gratifications, which must utterly disqualify for that heavenly society of angels and good men made perfect, of which the christian hopes to be the partaker, when *all tears shall be wiped from his eyes, for ever and ever?* And what shall we say of all the contentious intrigues, of all the proud and *murderous* marches of ambition? are these suggested by faith, are these *led on* by the great virtue, who shews us the coming ruin of this earth, the future demolition of death and time, and the first blazing out of everlasting felicity from beside the throne of God? No—it cannot be doubted but that a practice so inconsistent with christian faith, must in a great degree occasion that infidelity of which *consideration* is the calm cure, inasmuch as faith approves itself to candour, and is ready to embrace reason: therefore the truth will be easily discovered by him who is willing to find it, and *who takes heed that there may not be in him*

him an evil heart of unbelief; who also takes heed to begin this important work, while it is called to-day, and not to defer this one thing most needful, till that hour comes when no man can do this work, and yet will be compelled all at once to believe and to tremble—beneath the punishments of infidelity.

S E R M O N I V.

I JOHN V. 5.

*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he
that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.*

FAITH is *great* in a variety of views,
in its effects, and in its causes. It is
in *general* produced by an eminent virtue, and
produces it; it is the source of much joy,*
for it *is the substance of things hoped for, and
the evidence of things not seen.*† Therefore
faith unfolding our future existence beyond

* Or, according to Dr. Hammond, Archbishop Tillotson,
&c. a confident dependance upon God for the performance of
his promise, a being convinced of the truth of those things of
which we have no ocular or sensible demonstration.

† Hebrews xi. 1.

the

the grave, hath an excellent effect upon the understanding of the good man, by enriching it with this information, that death is as nothing to excite his fear or his sorrow, and that the interests of this life are not worthy his utmost desires, or proper objects of any thing like *anxiety*. Thus death itself, once held an irresistible conqueror, and naturally the object of terror, is, in an important sense, *swallowed up in the victory of faith*, and at the same time, the God of this world is deprived at once of all his homage. *Faith overcometh the world*; and faith consisting in the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, in the belief of redemption through the grace of God, yet not without the works of man, places the mind in the following state: it rejoiceth in the confidence that after its one step (this life) into a boundless eternity, it shall be perfectly happy; and is the more cheerfully, indeed the more *amiably* confident in this prospect, since the hope of endless happiness mingles itself with the reverence of divine truth, and with the love of the redeeming cause; and animates the *generous* as well as the selfish part of our nature to co-operate in

in the production of our best *works*. The *whole* man says, in the language of St. James, *I will shew thee my faith by my works*.

Thus faith, the means of a knowledge not otherwise to be acquired, enlarges the views and improves the conduct of man; higher thoughts are engendered in him by this new prospect, and having *put on the breastplate of faith*, he defies the *encircling* hosts of present temptations. The present life, through faith, appears to continue itself into the future; through faith one eternal line is seen to measure the duration of man; and the better part of it beyond the *indivisible* point of death, and made *evident* by faith, is readily judged by the human soul as the portion of its existence in which it is most concerned; as the period of its superior welfare; and still the more interesting, as it is to come, and to be its own *for ever*. It therefore presents itself to its wishes as the home of its last settlement, or as the glorious haven to which it is passing over this *narrow* sea of troubles; but thus beheld by the eye of faith, it must of necessity be approved by *reason* as the only property worthy our *utmost* desires. He therefore

fore who through faith hath this *evidence of things* (and such things) *not seen* by his carnal eyes, must either have a small measure even of common sense, or see and *feel too* that he has a very little interest in the *fugitive* possessions of this life: possessions which have the strong *wings of an eagle*, and grasped ever so hardly by the dying hands of man, soon escape them, so soon are they *dead*. Be it so, and God be praised for his mercies in Christ Jesus, in whom *whosoever believeth, overcometh the world*, and rejoiceth to *flee away as a shadow*, and through faith foresees himself *continuing with perfect bliss in the one stay of eternity*. *—Thus powerful is faith as a principle of hope to the human soul.

But if faith is thus powerful, by enlarging the prospects of *hope*, it is equally so by disclosing to *fear* the regions of future punish-

* “ He fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth
“ in one stay.”

“ In the midst of life we are in death.”

Burial Service.

Under the sense of this melancholy truth we receive an adequate consolation from faith. *Of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who for our sins art justly displeased?* This important question is answered by faith.

ment.

ment. Thus it forces its way into the two main springs of human *activity*, and can, if any thing can, distribute them into those directions which are most conducive to human happiness.—And is there any good that we lose by faith?

Its divine light but shews us more clearly that vanity in this life, which otherwise has usually (and no wonder) been suspected. Consideration deduces the resolutions which depend upon the discoveries afforded us by faith. Therefore as *our hearts should be there where our treasures are*, we are soon taught by consideration that heaven, and the means of acquiring it, should be the principal objects of our attention and desire. But if this resolve is admitted, and brought into practice, it will be readily (but more readily than wisely) objected by some, that then we shall lose much enjoyment in this world, for nothing can be *enjoyed* in the utmost degree which is not in the same degree *desired*; and that the necessary as well as ornamental offices of this life will not receive their requisite attention and cultivation. Objections perfectly groundless; for were there no future life
beyond

beyond the grave, such a behaviour respecting the present as christianity dictates, would be the best means of enjoying it; for as it may be proved by reason, so it has been found in fact, that the most ardent and impassioned pursuit of terrestrial enjoyment, is a force that over-runs itself, and expatiates beyond its point; that it is a rash expenditure in *one* moment of what ought to be distributed on many; that it is the waste of a whole winter's fuel on the blaze of a day; or the cultivation of a feast or two at the expence of as many hundred fasts. View this impassioned conduct in its general effects, and ye will own that upon the whole of life, the most happy are the most moderate; and that the fires of ambitious and impetuous passion, though they scatter a broader light, and play more sublimely, are much oftener found the sources of anxiety, discord, and destruction, than of that permanent peace and contentment which encircle and embellish the domestic fire side. It is therefore seen in fact, that the warmest votaries of this world are in general the least happy—for they are then acting under the force of *blind* passion, and are of course *un-guided*;

guided; therefore though vested with an *imperial* power and affluence, they but afford the more conspicuous instances of the inseparable union between folly and misery. Such instances the world exhibited at the very time when the holy spirit dictated that eulogium upon faith, which is the subject of our present contemplation.* The world cannot be enjoyed but as a *mere passage* to a better state, and as such it can only please us to a certain degree; he therefore who aims at more, precipitates himself into disappointment, and by the vanity of his hope, occasions the *vexation of his spirit*. Faith therefore by its discoveries, does not lessen the enjoyment of this world, but teaches us *how* and *how far* to enjoy it: a lesson *half-taught* by mere reason, but rarely, or with difficulty practised till reason was farther enlightened, encouraged, and intimidated by the discoveries of faith. Faith and reason *combined* are a strength against temptations, to which the latter alone will most certainly yield; man therefore never pays so heavy a tax

* If according to Dr. Benson's opinion this Epistle was written in the year of our Lord 68, and of Nero 14.

as when through the pride of his reason he refuses the aid of faith, and foolishly forgetting reason as one gift of God, impiously rejects this other. But till this is received, reason will have its doubts respecting a future state of rewards and punishments; and caught in this *tremulous* state of uncertainty will be the less able to resist the *strong* assailable of things present. Pitiable are the nobler minds in this condition: no wonder therefore that the finer strains of the grave and moralizing heathen, poet or philosopher, breathe an air of the most touching melancholy, seemingly unfelt by those *resembling* spirits which have been blessed with the illuminations of christian faith. How *great* then is faith, which dissipates the horrors of doubt in points of the utmost concern to human happiness; and directing our chief desires into the current of heavenly hope, enables us to glide peaceably through things temporal, and to gather up all the good that *time* can produce. For surely he whose ideas of christianity are founded upon its pure representation in the divine word, will find that it contains the only scheme of *a lovely and praise-worthy* conduct,

by

by which we can best satisfy every *temporal* duty, call into play every charming quality, and embellish the earth itself with the most laudable efforts of human wisdom and ingenuity.

But the worlding (it is the Prophet's imagery) working his way with all the turbulence of an *immoderate* appetite, tosseth up all the mire and dirt of sin, cherisheth within himself all the deformities and diseases of his nature, and then exposes them to view. Or, one may compare him to a torrent, now (*in the ignorance and impetuous pride of youth*) raging in vain against resistless rocks; then (*in the period of ambitious manhood*) spreading itself, a destructive flood, over the fruits of the earth, and at the utmost cost of other men; and at length, it may be, deprived of all its breadth and force, and scattered, sunk, and lost in the boundless and unfathomable quicksands of *avarice*.

Faith assuredly appoints us a very different line and movement, and renders our conduct a current that is at once clear, and calm, and noble, till it *wins* its way into the ocean of a blessed eternity.

But

But let us not merely *argue* to shew what faith *can* do, since the primitive ages of christianity have declared what it *has* done. Our Saviour cannot be considered as an *example* of faith, he is the *object* of it; he *knew*, but we *believe*. St. Paul the great teacher of charity, is the most animated preacher, and perhaps the most striking example of faith. His writings are not in vain transmitted, and his labours in the cause of truth in vain *peculiarly* recorded by the holy spirit. He had been among the earliest and most bigoted persecutors of the apostolic church, and on a sudden becomes its most heroic champion. Of course then he was at first dreaded by the apostles as a malignant hypocrite, opposed often by the Jews as an infamous apostate, and probably detested by the Greek for the force and acuteness of his understanding, and his avowed contempt of that *their* artificial eloquence, which he proved himself capable of practising and despising to practise.

But review shortly the outset of the apostolical age, more especially that awful period, when, after our Lord's ascent, the apostles

alone and his few disciples appeared at the head of the christian church. I would fix your recollection upon that instant, when the promised assistance of the holy spirit was abundantly poured forth upon them on the day of the Pentecost, and they then became sufficiently qualified with divine knowledge and power, for the discharge of the most important office which was ever entrusted to the sons of men. Their faith is *now* no longer wavering, and amounts to that degree of it, that they may be said *to live by faith, and not by sight*; and therefore faith is become, as it were, *sight* to them, and they *are dead to this world*, so lively are they impressed with the *evidence of things not seen*.

And now recollect what and who they are, unsupported by secular power and by party, meanly born, and as meanly educated; conceive, as far as ye can, the external circumstances through which they are to open a way for the progress of truth.

The narrow-minded Jews conceive themselves the favourites and elect of God, on account of their special desert, and cannot see the subserviency of their theocracy to the rest of mankind, whom they behold with a contempt that

that almost amounts to horror. In these impure mirrors the prophetic picture of the Messiah had been so discoloured and deformed, as to shew him in the shape of such a deliverer of them from the Roman yoke, as would prostrate their bleeding masters beneath the *trampings* of their feet. They are negligent of the *moral* observances, and seem only attached to the *ritual*, as circumstances which adorn them as a *people*, and exalt them above the rest of mankind: therefore this attachment is in proportion to their pride, and their pride appears such, that they would sooner die than be deplumed of these honours. This their spiritual haughtiness is but the more inflamed from the sense of their thralldom beneath the Romans, whilst their political situation tempted them into the practice of all venality and corruption; so that we might *then* have seen in them all the baseness without the quiet of servitude, and all the pride of the tyrant without the power. So humanized as we now are by christianity, we cannot easily conceive the flagitiousness of that Jewish race, which crucified the Son of God; but when we read the penal and *predicted* effects of that

atrocious act, and see in what respects *his blood was upon them and their children*, from the reports of their eye-witness Josephus—we turn with horror from the melancholy detail; a detail at once of the utmost misery and wickedness, of which a murderous malice and the most relentless obstinacy constitute the prevailing colours. It is evidently a continuation of the same manners which marked them in the time of our Saviour, and the Jewish historian but comments (*providentially*) on the gospel of Christ. But this gospel is not only to be preached *first* to this people, but at the very time when they are likely to be in the *worst temper* to receive it. There had been a national triumph, *in their opinion*, over the crucified Saviour: yet there is a report of his resurrection, and this report, where it was not credited, must have irritated them against the apostles, who seem impostors; and where it was *half-credited* by the malignant rulers, we cannot but believe that in them there was a mixture of alarm, hatred, and vengeance, with a *diabolicism* of impious obstinacy, of which though we cannot now form an adequate conception, we
may

may yet conceive that the effect of such a temper in the *rulers* of the people, would be the most virulent opposition imaginable to the disciples of him whom they had crucified. Surely they will hold their triumph with a very tenacious grasp, lest it should be wrenched out of their hands; and meet the apostles at least with as *much* resistance, opposition, and hatred, as they met the divine Jesus. If when the supposed son of the *carpenter* Joseph, presumed to scatter away their glories, and melt these haughty children of Israel into the mass of nations, they cried out *crucify, crucify him!* it is not probable that their pride will take less offence at the same attempt in the poor *fishermen*. A second return to such a fray, from such a lowly quarter to such a proud one, bodes a conflict more horrible than the first. In truth, their sum of wickedness must have warmed in its course—but faith is *great*, and the apostles, for the *first* time, are now *perfectly* armed with the *breastplate* of faith. They shall soon *overcome* this powerful cohort, which the *world* first opposes to them, for they now firmly *believe that Jesus is the Son of God*.

But this is not all, the Jewish people are dispersed in every province of the Roman empire, and as it was to be expected, so it was in fact found, that they rushed forth in every quarter as so many several armies in battle array against the followers of Christ. Be it observed too, that the gospel is not to be preached in *corners*, to be advanced step by step through one little nation unto another, at a *barbarous* period, when there are no arts, letters, and associations between the nations of the earth; for it now commences its glorious career in the eyes of an enlightened world, and under the vigilant cognizance of the *one* Roman government; and seemingly at first, a Jewish system, it is at once to have the odium of such, and yet every where to find the Jew its fiercest enemy. At the same time it undertakes to demolish not one false religion, but many, and to oppose a variety, and the most ancient prejudices; and be it observed too—to oppose many religions which favour vice, and which therefore must find in the vicious the warmest defenders, and also as many, which to a large part of mankind had been long the source of riches and honours—therefore

fore the demolition of these, implies a power to wrench property out of the hands of the needy, as well as of those whose luxurious habits have created in them an artificial want, and at the same time to deprive the ambitious of the most desired honours. Add too, that the attempt to prostrate the mind of man beneath the divine authority, was then undertaken, when human reason must have been tempted into the utmost self-complacence—for it had but then soared its utmost height upon the subjects of morals, and the chief good of man.* Therefore human philosophy, as yet uncontrolled by the divine, was probably at this period in the highest estimation. The philosopher pretended only to advise, but the apostle assumes to command; the former plausibly accommodates, but the latter says to the idolater, *down, down with your idols to the ground*; the former, when eloquence was in the highest request, wins his way by the most

* More especially the admirable work of the *Roman* Cicero upon these topics, must at this time have been in its freshest renown over the Roman world, perhaps at this very time, since probably the political prejudices against him must have now died away.

attractive strains of rhetoric; the latter, rejects and avows to reject the *enticing words of man's wisdom*. Be it observed too, that at this time human eloquence was now more fastidiously cultivated than ever, and began to be tricked out by the hands of an effeminate delicacy. Therefore the unadorned simplicity of the apostolical language (however the language for *all* ages and nations) was ill-adapted to the genius of that age, and those nations where it was first heard. But *great was faith* in the apostles, and therefore confident in the arm of God, they boldly met these obstructions, and what was still more formidable, the *universal* depravity of human manners; yea, by *faith*, they undertook to *remove these mountains*, and the great and the little hills melted before them fast enough to smoothe the requisite way *for the King of glory*. Surely then this *belief in Jesus as the Son of God*, was the principle in the apostles, that induced them to undertake the *moral* conquest of the world. But if it should be objected that the apostles could not but *believe*, I can only answer, that it was not my point to shew the *virtue*, but the *power* of faith in the apostles. However it is to be presumed,

presumed, that they had much moral merit to qualify them for the gift of faith; and considering the *present* extent of christendom, we surely should acknowledge with gratitude, that they did not *abuse* but *use* this gift for its intended and gracious purpose. Glory then be to God in the highest, inasmuch as faith is known by good works, and *charity is the end of the commandment*; therefore peace on earth, and good-will among men, and the victory over the world are the fruits of our *belief that Jesus is the Son of God.*

S E R M O N V.

REVELATION iii. 20.

Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and be with me.

C H R I S T I A N faith, that union of holy practice and persuasion, standeth so near to us, that it waits only for our act to admit it; it will not of itself *open the door and come in to us*, but if we open the door, *it will come in to us*, and spread before us that feast which shall nourish us into *eternal* health and happiness.

He who has begun to partake of this feast, will feel the force of that pathetic imagery,
and

and endearing simplicity, in which the holy scripture has represented the Redeemer himself as standing at the door.

Perhaps this interesting picture of divine goodness, may remind you of our Saviour's address to Jerusalem, and suggest to you the language which he may be supposed continually to hold to us, till we open our hearts to the reception of his blessed law.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathering her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.

But may ye never hear from him what follows—*behold your house is left unto you desolate!* Desolate indeed is the house of man, when the door of it is shut against his Saviour.

It will be attempted in the ensuing discourse, to shew what circumstances may seduce man into such misconduct, and what his virtue is in resisting them, and *opening the door to faith.*

The subject is extensive and important, and a few hints and queries only can now be submitted to your serious consideration.

If

If we sometimes think it reasonable to *receive the witness of man*, to put faith in him, or assent unto his word as true,* yet without any evident certainty of its truth from our own sense or understanding, in short, to believe what he says upon the authority of *his* judgment, knowledge, and integrity—it of course behoves us *to receive the witness of God as greater*, inasmuch as God knows all things, cannot be deceived by the error of his judgment, and will not deceive through the want of integrity.

And if the credit given by man to man, is in many instances, the debt of justice, the act of good sense, and the means of promoting good-will among men—so faith in God (otherwise a duty) unites the creature more closely to the creator; in short, perfects that union which is the best means of moral obedience or virtue; therefore as the latter is the chief end of human free-agency, the choice

* To believe a thing, is to assent unto it as true, without any evident certainty of the truth thereof, either from our sense or understanding.

Dr. T. Jackson upon the eternal truths of scripture, &c.

of faith, if it can be *chosen*, is the noblest act of the human will.

Man may be so embruted in wickedness, in its vile tempers and habits, of stupifying lusts, of hatred and rage, suspicion and envy, as to disbelieve the word of God as true, even when he must believe it to be *his* word.

Suspicion in the *extreme* is incompatible with faith, and in itself always leans to infidelity. At the best, as an unpleasant temper, it is but a necessary evil; therefore faith, if the result of *choice*, is a rational and noble rejection of this evil, when it *well* rejects it.

A good man would be rather thought unwise than ungenerous; and feels it a force upon his nature when he is compelled by the usual courses of the world to stand upon the guard of suspicion. There is surely something more like a virtue in believing too much than too little, arguing an honest and amiable, and not seldom, a brave and magnanimous temper, in short, a character of mind far more respectable than the utmost intellectual qualities, considered as apart from virtue, for they are even *contemptible* when suspicion makes them stoop beneath the yoke of secular pride and ambition.

If

If some of the truths revealed by God are *in part* incomprehensible by man, can *he*, being but *man*, have cause to be surpris'd, cause indeed to wish it to be otherwise, knowing the wisdom and goodness of his Maker? And are we pleas'd to put faith in a *wise and good man* because we honour him, and the more endear ourselves to him by such confidence, and yet shall we be unwilling to confide alike in God, whom we own ourselves bounden *to love* (for nature itself yields us this precept) *with our whole heart, and soul, and strength?*

And shall God make *many* things clear to us, the discovery of which was once lamentably needed, and yet shall we be dissatisfied because *every* thing in his divine revelation is not *equally* clear and comprehensible? What, shall *man* be thus severe to mark what is done by *God*? Is *man* competent to project the manner in which *God* should act, and to prescribe to *the Holy One* the courses of his wisdom? Shall this earthly craftsman thus *stretch out his rule, mark out* a work for God *with the line, fit it with planes, and mark it out*

*out with the compass?** verily man might as well attempt to make a God, as did the idolatrous artist of old, as to design the *outgoings of the Most High*.

But if God sufficiently instructs us for the purposes of moral obedience, what need we more? If he affords us sufficient walks for the *blameless* excursions of our speculating powers, walks in number and kind, more than adequate to the collective and utmost exertions of human intellect, why should man wish to scale the spiritual heavens themselves in his daring flight after knowledge, and mount into a region where he has not *as yet* wings to carry him? Why peevishly not employ his little moiety of time in proper researches, when he knows that these wings will be *very soon* allowed to him whose *present* hour has been occupied in its *proper* work? Instinct, which is God's reason directing the brute beast, never thus exceeds its line, and should be *authoritatively* as it is *divinely* exemplary and instructive to man.

* Isaiah xliv. 13.

And

And is it not consistent with this state of trial, in which the pleasures of time and the *god of this world* seduce us on one side, whilst on the other our affections are commanded towards the *God of all Gods*, and his eternal rewards—that our faith in him that made us should be *fully* tried? But if the evidences of his word, and his word itself should be presented to us in such a plenitude of light as to *compel* us to see their truth, faith in God, the first form of moral obedience, would *not* be fully tried.

The light of divine revelation seems only so far afforded us, as to shew us sufficiently the path of obedience, and yet leaves us the power, though not the right, of missing our way: a certain attention is requisite on our part to descry it. Therefore should a man not descry, and thence not believe the existence of such a path, it behoves him to examine the process of his mind which occasioned his disbelief. Should his *verdict* have originated in partiality, prejudice, inattention, and an ungenerous heart of suspicion, there is a *sin* in his infidelity: but if on the contrary, a man should *believe* in consequence

consequence of the opposite conduct, there is a *virtue* in his faith.

What think ye would be the consequence if the glorious rewards of futurity, and the Deity himself, had been so revealed to us as to become as it were *the things of sight* to us, and for the purpose of apprehending them the human mind was *miraculously* prepared? we should be no longer in a state of trial. But can ye conceive any line between that of sight, and the present of faith? we are now called upon to believe God, but not *to see him as we are seen*; and if we have cause for such belief, we ought to dread the punishments of disbelief.

He that without cause disbelieves your assertion which ye *know* to be true, becomes at first, and very naturally, the object of your contempt and indignation, unless ye have habituated yourselves to deceive others. This I conceive to be the sentiment of most men; which is a proof that, in general opinion, a tendency to faith is a virtuous tendency. It is *unquestionably* true, that on this mutual confidence the happier commerce between man and man most materially depends. Ex-

cessive suspicion seems either an arrogant pretension to superior sagacity ; or a consciousness of bad habits, of which therefore we are naturally led to suspect others, or to wish them not *exclusively* our own ; or it is a proof of having kept bad company ; or of having been exercised in employments or professions (otherwise, it may be, respectable) which have a tendency to induce this corruption on the human heart ; or it is the creature of censorious or controversial habits ; or it is the movement of a pettish, mean, or cowardly, a minute, or pedantic mind ; or it may sometimes be a kind of ambitious avarice, or art, disposing us to monopolize the confidence we deny to other men, and to work our way into that consequence, authority, and station which are above our talents and virtues, and which can only be *sustained* (however seldom *acquired* through the opposition of *suspicious* minds) by the felicities of superior genius in union with the higher degrees of moral worth.

I should not have paused so much in these conjectural observations upon suspicion, had I
not

not been long and firmly persuaded that its excesses resemble envy, by occasioning the severest tortures in human life ; but with this difference, that the suspicious man torments others as much as, and often more, than himself. Costly and abundant are the victims of suspicion: friendships, formed in ingenuous youth, melt away beneath its pestilential influence ; and by it the very best of men are despoiled of their dearest earthly good, the esteem of their fellow-creatures ; whilst the same evil temper respecting God favours infidelity, and becomes injustice aggravated by impiety. The prevalence of a despicable cunning in the commerce of life, is the effect of prevailing suspicion ;—a circumstance the more to be regretted as the evil of it falls chiefly upon the most helpless, or the most worthy of the human race.

Man left only to the tuition of reason, or, in this day of divine light, depending only upon it, cannot extricate himself from the mazes of scepticism and uncertainty. Therefore one of the noblest ends of human exertion is to *ascertain* the best rule of human

G 2

conduct ;

conduct ; and the cultivation of faith for this important purpose, as it implies the choice and pursuit of this noble end, is a generous, wise, and commendable act : it shews as if a man wished to do what is right, and is therefore in earnest to discover his rule ; it bespeaks firmness, and rectitude of heart. Faith would not *stand at your door* to be invited in, did she not bring her *credentials* with her ; she would flash into your house with a flood of light, did she not mean that you should *seek* her illumination with the eyes of your reason.

Therefore christianity *commands* its followers to *prove all things*, and yet to believe its divine authority ; it challenges the most searching scrutiny of reason as the *certain* step to faith, and rears to its utmost height the fabric of the understanding in order to crown it with faith. A circumstance surely which redounds to the honour of divine revelation, and to the man who thus proving all things of *course* believes. Verily *wisdom shall be justified of this her child*, and the Omniscient shall amply reward him with *length of days*, days without end *in his left hand*, and *in his right with riches*

riches and honours;—properly so called, as these are not the riches and honours which *take unto themselves the wings of an eagle, and flee away.*

Faith therefore implies a willing and the *best* exertion of reason; and religion and wisdom, terms synonymous in the school of Solomon, are equally so in that of Christ.

But my principal point is to shew the *virtue* of faith, which will farther appear, should it be admitted, that the readiness to close with a good rule is expressive of a good heart.

Though the gospel of Christ contains not a regular system of morals, it virtually includes the moral law of reason by avowing it; and places it in such important views, that a vicious man must be disinclined to seek his rule in the divine word, secretly sensible that it is a greater effort to war against this authority than that of reason.—Would to God that so many facts did not glare upon us in support of this assertion. But the moral precepts of christianity, though agreeable to reason, yet rise above its *wonted* language, with such decisive and energetic statements of

virtue,* that this charge to a heavenly conversation, which is so reprehensive of worldly manners, cannot at first find its entertainment but in that mind which leans towards virtue. There must not only be some purity in the habits, but a certain candour and liberality in the temper of him who thus advances towards faith; for in this important scrutiny, he of course regards only the christian law as it is in *itself*, and not as it has been *misrepresented*, and he turns away his eyes from that sword of persecution which christianity is often insinuated, but not without blasphemy, to justify. Christianity is the gospel of Christ, and the gospel of Christ is as luminous as the

* *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow: and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Heb. iv. 12.

It speaks as one having divine authority, and not as man speaks;—the moral deductions of man are not always waters from the purest fountain. Human opinions are often controvertible, and therefore without offence to propriety controverted.

When man says, *thou shalt not commit adultery*, the soul of the adulterer is not *divided asunder*; but a different impression is made when he believes that this is the prohibition of *God*.

lightning

lightning in its clearness of decision, and as forcible as the thunderbolt in its strength of declaration, against every form of inhumanity: *it judges not, it honours all men, it leaves every man to his own master.* But adequate images are not within reach to express a proper sense of christianity as the great law of charity, and to suggest a due spirit of indignation against those whose malicious art would fix the public attention upon the offences *against* christianity, as the necessary result of it. But if reason itself has been equally abused by the general practice, shall we therefore reject reason? If the actual conduct of men can be defended only upon this principle, that *the passions are the proper governors of man*, shall we therefore surrender ourselves to these *blind* guides? And if the belief of a God, from an ignorance of his nature, has been and is abundantly abused to the most horrible purposes, shall we therefore become Atheists? This surely were the *madness of the people*, of gross, carnal, unenlightened minds, *raging against the Lord God omnipotent himself as well as against his anointed.*

But the searcher after divine truth has a farther trial. Pride, almost universal in man, may still lurk within his heart, however impressed with good dispositions in other respects. He is tempted to be proud of his reason, that faculty which *crowns* him above all terrestrial animals. He perceives in divine revelation (as it were strange if he did not) some doctrines which exceed the perfect apprehension of his reason. Enamoured of the moral rule, and its rewards, he then either rejects them as *divinely* revealed, should his reasoning pride forbid him to receive those mysterious doctrines which accompany them; or he strains his reason (as many think with me) in a lawless latitude of interpretation, to torture them down into a form satisfactory to its imperious demand; or he receives these mysterious doctrines, and probably in consequence of the following arguments.

“ If it is rational ” (I can imagine him to say to himself) “ for a man who has frequently lost his way to put faith in a guide, who is conceived to know it, let me be disposed (apprized as I am of the misadventures of reason, and the tendency of a
“ faculty

“ faculty so active to exceed in activity) to
“ fit a docile disciple at the feet of a *Divine*
“ Master. And when I consider this uni-
“ verse, a picture as it were so vast and so
“ various, including within it the earth and
“ the heavens, why should I be unwilling to
“ behold it occasionally diversified by an awful
“ and sublime darkness, to lose myself in
“ these obscure doctrines, in these clouds,
“ and this thick darkness that roll around
“ the tabernacle of God? Considering an
“ *eternity* of happiness, so disproportionate
“ to my best merits, ought I not to embrace
“ with joy the doctrine of *Redemption*? And
“ conscious of continual offences against duty,
“ ought I not to console myself with the
“ promised aids of *the Holy Spirit*? Here is
“ unfolded to my view the last great lawgiver
“ of the human race, appearing at length
“ after the august preparations of prophecy
“ from the foundation of the world, and ex-
“ hibiting himself, and exhibited by his dis-
“ ciples as the perfect model of humility,
“ and yet speaking *as one with the Father*, in
“ such a manner as no prophet ever spake
“ before—shall I then hastily conceive of him

“ as

“ as the mere prophet, and incur the hazard
“ of lessening his authority over me, *his* au-
“ thority who is *unquestionably* the universal
“ lawgiver, *Lord*, and judge of mankind?
“ Besides is it for *me* to ascertain the power
“ of the *Father* to impart of himself? Or
“ am not I less competent to conceive of
“ heavenly things, than the shivering peasant
“ in the vallies of Greenland is to understand
“ the abstrusest speculation of the best-in-
“ formed human intellect? *One God* is the
“ doctrine of the divine word, and the *Father*
“ appears the fountain of all, his majesty fills
“ up every page, and his glory is the foremost
“ object of attention and reverence in every
“ christian church. God, the mere Deity
“ considered by me;—I shrink beneath
“ the *blazing* idea—here a *veil* is interposed,
“ which at once suits my human frailty,
“ whilst the example of the *man* Christ Jesus
“ as sweetly as clearly exemplifies to me the
“ method of decreasing it—by a life of
“ righteousness.

“ Oh! let me read this glorious book with
“ a simplicity of heart to understand it, and
“ not with any prejudices and preconceptions
“ to

“ to *bend* it into a conformity to my own
“ ideas, till I *break* it (it may be) into a
“ contrariety to the truth.

“ And if the holy scripture is indeed holy
“ by being the word of God, will not the
“ same method of accurate observation upon
“ the *word* itself, as in late ages has been
“ successfully directed towards his *works*, be
“ productive of the like good effects for the
“ advancement of *divine* knowledge?

“ And are there not provinces in *both* from
“ which the utmost activity of reason should
“ be withdrawn, and diverted to quarters in
“ *both* in which it may be profitable? Is
“ not knowledge itself but in order to virtue,
“ and works productive of good? And has
“ not much misery arisen to mankind from
“ the vain ambition of reason to gain settle-
“ ments beyond its powers of advancement,
“ confounding by *ratiocination* that truth
“ which lay open to patient *inspection*, and
“ raising a dust of obscurity by this hurry,
“ this warfare of arguing, a dust not seldom
“ mingled and polluted with the blood of
“ mankind? Have not doctrines the most
“ horrible been ascribed to the holy scriptures
“ from the misinterpreting pride of man?

“ And

“ And has not the obstinate adherence to
 “ these doctrines, an obstinacy originating in
 “ human pride, abundantly occasioned the
 “ disrepute and disbelief of divine truth itself?
 “ And as till the days of Socrates points the
 “ most useful, subjects the most intelligible,
 “ had been neglected by the Sophist and the
 “ Sciolist, at the expence of worrying society
 “ with frivolous or mischievous contests;
 “ thus hath not Christianity itself been abused
 “ by the speculating pride of man? And is
 “ not the existence of a few mysterious doc-
 “ trines in the gospel of Christ the means of
 “ trying my faith in God? And is the great
 “ mystery of all, any thing but the disclosure
 “ of a truth, plain (it is probable) and intel-
 “ ligible to beings of a higher order than
 “ man, and only relatively obscure to him?
 “ And is it not so august in its subject that
 “ man, conscious of his small powers, should
 “ be fearful to touch, and much more to *handle*
 “ it? * And yet seen at an awful distance,

* The example of Mr. Boyle, who never mentioned the
 name of God without a visible pause, reprobates *their* be-
 haviour who analyze Deity with as much composure, and con-
 fidence of discovery, as they would a mineral water.

“ is it not adapted with a sufficient clearness
“ to excite in him principles the most impor-
“ tant—the utmost dread of sin, with the
“ utmost love and reverence of his Redeemer?
“ And is this at all inconsistent with the
“ dignity of God the Father? I believe in
“ the gospel of Christ; and why? because I
“ believe it to be the word of *God*. And if
“ I believe in its mysterious doctrines, my
“ faith in such belief respects God himself.
“ After all—*One God* is (in my professed
“ belief) the doctrine of this gospel; and I
“ think it more my duty, and more within
“ my very limited ability, as man, to shew
“ my loyalty to the King of Kings, by
“ obeying his laws, than by attempting to
“ explain his nature, and guard his dignity.
“ —And how can his dignity be diminished
“ by those who profess to believe in *one* God,
“ and glory to prostrate their reason before
“ his throne, and to withstand that proud
“ and pragmatical lawlessness of reason in
“ transgressing its line, which has so abun-
“ dantly disordered and distressed human
“ society?”

But

But if such a tenor of thinking should lead to such a conclusion, ye will probably agree with me, that the man who on this important occasion so thinks and so resolves, will see the truth, and advance in the faith through the assistance of a sound understanding, kept within its province by a good heart. But shall we therefore conclude that he who takes the contrary line, gives evidence of a bad heart? laudable directions of intellect in other subjects may blamelessly seduce the inadvertent mind to continue *improperly* those its processes which it has found successful in their *proper* place; and a generous indignation at dogmatical movements in men of the opposite persuasion, may tempt them from that reverent moderation which reason dictates, but dictates to *frail* man.

It is indeed to be expected that the searcher after divine truth will, in its diversified repository, the holy bible, meet with abundant difficulties to try his candour and piety, to exercise what is *accurate* as well as *comprehensive* in his mind; what is *amiable* as well as *noble*; what is *equitable* to withstand present prejudices; *manly* to turn aside from
present

present indulgences, and to persevere in considerative diligence; *acute* to suspect that the humanizing influence of christianity itself has been *perhaps* the means of lessening his attachment to this divine revelation; and *resolute* to tear him as it were from himself, by forcing him to resist (occasionally) the influence of his best-beloved companions and friends.

Reason, so weak without faith (witness its history before the coming of Christ, and its effects at present where the holy gospel is not known), has yet been so strengthened by its *long* union with it, that the pride of man in the former may seduce him to impute the moral results of this union to the *sole* efforts of reason: he may therefore be tempted by this form of pride to reject the support of faith, and to set up upon that old stock of reason, which has ever been found an unproductive and inadequate fund for supplying the requisite means of human virtue and happiness.

‘ Would we not therefore, O Faith! thou
‘ divine and angelic sister of Hope and Charity,
‘ become the victims of pride, and through
self-confidence

‘ self-confidence melt beneath the sunshine,
‘ or break beneath the storms of this world,
‘ we must take shelter under the shadow of
‘ thy wings; for then our reason illumined,
‘ and our will excited by thee, shall issue at
‘ length in that conduct *which is the end of*
‘ *the commandment*; which fleeting Time yet
‘ steals from him his best enjoyments; which
‘ springing from the earth half arrives at
‘ heaven, and thus exalted by thee, O Faith!
‘ views at a dim distance what were once,
‘ when *near*, the *dangerous* objects of *fight*.
‘ But, alas! when thou wouldest visit us
‘ *with healing* in thy wings, and *gather* us
‘ beneath their protecting shade, thou per-
‘ ceivest us flying from thy presence; for thy
‘ chaste beauty and simple dignity meet in us
‘ with a taste corrupted by meretricious arts,
‘ and a soul unnerved with luxurious indul-
‘ gences; though thy hand is still exalted,
‘ and points to the everlasting hill of righte-
‘ ousness and glory, still our eyes look down-
‘ wards upon Sin, who lies scattered in the
‘ vale of voluptuousness, tendering to us the
‘ flowers which are soon *dried up and withered*,
‘ and the fruit which *whoso tasteth shall see*
‘ *death*.

‘ death. When thou wouldest arrest our
 ‘ attention from this seducer, and sing unto
 ‘ us one of the *songs of Sion*—*charm it ever*
 ‘ *so wisely*, it cannot charm us now disused
 ‘ to its language, it is as it were a strange
 ‘ tongue in our land, and we are as the *deaf*
 ‘ *adder*, still continuing with the serpent to
 ‘ *lick the dust*, and *crawl upon the ground all the*
 ‘ *days of our life*. But when thou wouldest
 ‘ report unto us the great *Captain of our*
 ‘ *Salvation*, his death which out-soared all
 ‘ human heroism, and his life so correspon-
 ‘ dently perfect—we but glance at his diffi-
 ‘ miltude to them whom we habitually re-
 ‘ verence, to *the children of this world*, *so*
 ‘ *wise in their generation*, and in our eyes, and
 ‘ then turn aside from the dignity whose base
 ‘ was virtue, nor admire the manners whose
 ‘ garb was poverty. Vain-glorious, avaricious,
 ‘ sensual, we cannot listen to his doctrine, so
 ‘ reprehensive of our conduct, or relish his
 ‘ divine language, *so simply, so severely*
 ‘ *great*,* as to sound harsh and uncultured to

* How simply, how severely great !

Akenfide's character of Milton's Poetry.

' minds which are steeped in the epicurean
 ' refinements of *modish* literature; whose
 ' whole mass of habits, O Faith, thou best
 ' gift of God to man! are in arms against
 ' thee; arms, (God help us, and oh! thou
 ' God of all our mercies, vouchsafe unto us
 ' thy *saving* help!) arms too easily presented
 ' to our use in every quarter; some the pa-
 ' rading and thunderous engines of declama-
 ' tory pride, some the venomed arrows that
 ' *fly in the dark*, and some the daggers and
 ' stilettos of assassinating malice.'

But if such are our difficulties in the pursuit
 of faith, he that surmounts them, surmounts
 them by his *virtue*; by that rational candour,
 pious diligence, considerative patience, manly
 fortitude, and due humiliation, with prayer
 and reverence before God, which are always
 our duty, and always in the power of that
 man who is qualified by *rational examination*
 to fix himself in the great principles of
 religion.* It behoves him to consider with
 the

* See this point supported with his usual powers of ex-
 pression, amplitude of views, felicity of illustration, and
 strength of reasoning, by Dr. Barrow, in his series of sermons
 upon

the utmost stretch of his attention, the end of this exertion ; and all along to be aware that a Syren-song is still warbling in his ears, to arrest him on his voyage to his desired haven.

Quick-sands, gulphs, and whirl-pools, are in the precincts of prosperity. Adversity is the school of wisdom, and man suffering under man, turns the more towards God the only *rock of his salvation*. *It is hard* (saith our Saviour) *for a RICH man to enter into the*

upon faith—— which, in union with Archbishop Tillotson's course of sermons upon the same subject, and the fourth sermon of Bishop Sanderfon, ad Clerum, well merit the most attentive perusal. The latter (as may be expected from the judicious writer), contains some valuable decisions against the doctrines of *ever-recurring* fanaticism ; and the habit of reading these fathers of rational divinity may be useful to guard the well-disposed mind against the last fanciful form of fanaticism which has made its appearance among us. It is a credited anecdote that the sermons of Dr. Barrow, upon faith, fixed at a mature age, a very celebrated and popular *Novelist* in his belief of christianity : it is not therefore matter of wonder, that in a certain work of his, he asserts, that Dr. Barrow “ wrote with the pen of an angel.” It is so much for the worldly interests of the infidel, and the mistaken points of the fanatic, to keep these eminent men out of the public view, that it is the duty of the rational christian to recal the public attention to them, and not to insinuate, that they have done their work, *are gathered to their fathers*, and may be forgotten.

kingdom of heaven. When this life is a beautiful and costly fore-ground to eternity, our attention is too strongly attracted towards it; but when it presents abundant objects of horror and misery, with a small interspersion of pleasing spectacles—we turn our attention from it, quicken our mental eye by consideration, and especially seek in *faith* the disclosure of fairer prospects to our *hope*; oppressed with this *poring night** of reason, we say unto faith, *let there be light, and there is light.*

Who can be too much in earnest upon this subject in the present age? an earthquake that was to level our luxurious metropolis with the ground, a wide-wasting pestilence, or a bloody war within our borders would create more faith than is now to be found among us. For it seems that God has not sufficiently distinguished us among the nations, and that the mercies and long-suffering of our indulgent Father are not the sufficient, as they are the noblest arguments for our advancement in piety. But the truth of christianity rather solicits the calm disquisition of *reason*, than

* Shakespear's Hen. V.

the hasty reception of *sentiment*; and God would rather *bind* us to him *by the cords of a CONSIDERATE man*, than *drag* us into his service by the chastisement appoirtioned to the petulant and inconsiderate *child*.

Lastly, I would thus illustrate the solemn address of God to all who have heard the name of Christ.

Some powerful prince, heroic in virtue, and so esteemed, is on the point of an important battle, and says to his followers, "He that in
" the coming contest doth his utmost in my
" cause, shall after it receive a perpetual dis-
" charge from all future warfare, with a
" property and honours which shall enable
" him to enjoy the remainder of his days in
" a manner that shall perfectly satisfy him." Surely such a declaration from such a person would have its intended weight.

But God, through Christ, makes a proposal to mankind as far superior in generosity to what has been stated, as the divine benevolence is to that of man: for can man augment the glory of God, as a gallant army does the fame of its leader? and is not one day, one hour, one minute, a larger portion of time in

comparison with the age of Methuselah, than the age of the world itself in comparison with eternity? in the mean time, is not *godliness profitable in things temporal*? unquestionably to him who has faith; for then in *him* the love of God is the strongest passion; and a state of trial and warfare under the banners of heavenly love and hope, cannot but gratify the latter, and increase the former. Facts innumerable speak aloud, that he who defies *evil* in the best cause, gathers up all along a greater measure of *good*. I deny not, but that there is some pain in *trial*, but *the holy company of martyrs* will bear me witness, that there is more pleasure in *victory*. I appeal to the well-attested records of their exultations in the most awful moments of their spiritual warfare.* No wonder therefore that a nobly-minded man when he most suffers for a be-
loved

* Doth not he who suffers death and tortures in what he honestly thinks the best cause, give evidence at least of a *heart* replete with the utmost piety to God and benevolence to man, in union with the highest degree of the first personal virtue, fortitude? What then shall we think of that Historian's *sagacity*, who accounts it an *information* when he tells us, that in the utmost human virtue, even in the act of martyrdom, there is an
allay

loved friend, feels the harsh strokes of irresistible pain marvellously assuaged by the music of approving conscience—that melody more tuneful than the harp of David, far more soothing and powerful to allay the *troubled* spirit.

But to him who thus approves his love to God, Faith holds a *crown* in view, and he springs on beneath the charge of love and hope, till he tramples *unheeded* death beneath his feet, wings himself away beyond the regions of Time, and arrives there where he shall *reign* for ever.

Oh! the mercies of God! his visible works *now* declare his loving-kindness, wisdom, and power—but his *promised* benefactions, when duly *considered* and *believed*, will appear such instances of goodness, that the *voice* of him (who *has opened the door*, ad-

allay of human infirmity; or in other words, that a man is a *man*? Or what shall we think of his *heart*, who, in an instance like this, takes *pains* to fix our chief attention upon the worst side of human nature? i. e. to rob the first form of virtue of our useful admiration, and them who have exhibited it, of our grateful reverence and remembrance?

Vide Dr. Maclaine's *Appen.* I. vol. 4. Mosheim's *Eccles. Hist.*

mitted his Saviour, and *began* to partake of his heavenly feast), will falter with an inability to describe the *divine* mercies; and his *imagination* will shrink beneath the blaze of the *divine* beneficence, till his enraptured *passions* are impressed with such a love and desire, admiration and gratitude towards God and his law, and his everlasting rewards—that he must be contented to speak the language which only God understands, and to breathe forth from his *heart* alone, the due HALLELUJAH.

S E R M O N VI.

St. MARK viii. 38.

*Whoſoever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me
and of my words in this adulterous and ſinful
generation; of him alſo ſhall the Son of man
be aſhamed when he cometh in the glory of his
Father with the holy angels.*

THESE words cannot but awfully
impreſs us after the preceding diſ-
courſes upon *confideration* and *faith*; and
that we may thoroughly enter into the ſpirit
of them, let us conſider the important matter
which introduced them, and in the order in
which it is preſented to us by the evangelists
Matthew and Mark.

The

The principal object of such a discussion is to shew the utter inconsistency of a secular spirit with the character of the christian; and if this point is obtained by this artless method, we shall have anticipated in the process of it every thing that need be said by way of observation and enforcement upon a passage of holy scripture, which cannot but arrest our attention and interest our hearts in the greatest degree; unless we should think that the present generation is not sinful and adulterous in its prevailing habits, to those principles which are purely christian; and as such, claim especial attention from those who believe in Christ and his doctrine of a future state.

Jesus, although he must have known what the people said about him, yet in order (probably) to try the Apostles themselves, and thereby take occasion for their instruction, questions them concerning the general reports. The answer given, suggests much to impress us with an august conception of our blessed Saviour: for this seeming son of the carpenter Joseph, this houseless indigent wanderer, appeared to the people to be John the Baptist, or Elias, or some other of the prophets arisen
from

from the dead. Such an opinion can be ascribed only to his *divine* power and heavenly conversation. The pomp and detail of a verbal panegyric would have interested us less, than when we now fix our thoughts upon the impressions which his conduct made upon the *living* spectators of it; for we naturally consider what sort of person he must be, who could *now* force from us the like opinion; who is not only judged by us to be a prophet, but a prophet arisen from the dead; receiving from us, in addition to the reverence generally paid to the prophetic character, that which we have been in the habit of specially appropriating to those venerable individuals who had once sustained that superior character, and whose memorial is embalmed in holy record.

But when Peter had reported the opinions of the people, the Apostles were then questioned by our Lord concerning their own; Peter answereth and saith unto him, *Thou art THE CHRIST*. The people it seems had conceived him to be, either the lately-revered Baptist, or one of their ancient and famous prophets: a great conception of him,
in

in human view, but he passed by the information in majestic silence; for it was necessary that the Apostles should entertain a higher conception of him. It is clear that the people did not conceive him to be the Messiah, not knowing how to interpret the prophets, and expecting a deliverer of a very different kind and appearance from the blessed Jesus, and greater, in their miserable conception of greatness, than the sublime conqueror of sin and death: therefore when Peter had acknowledged him for the Christ, Jesus said unto him, *blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.*

So far as our Lord indirectly, and yet clearly, indirectly, and therefore with a modest majesty, avows himself the Messiah—he addresses all the Apostles; but in the words just repeated,

repeated, he addresses Peter only, and not his apostolical brethren, or his episcopal successors in the see of Rome.

Perस्पicity of speech (when uninspired man is the speaker), is in general one of its indispensable requisites: but the words of the prophet, and apostle, and of one greater than either, words too recorded by the Holy Spirit, are more or less obscure according to their end, of which God alone is the judge. His words like his works last through ages, and like them, by being more or less obscure, are contrived to exercise the power, and try the virtues of men: they are not therefore addressed to the rapid perception of persons, present at their delivery. Peter might not clearly understand the prophecy respecting himself, till it was fulfilled, till he was in fact the first preacher of the gospel, beheld the conversions made by him, and the establishment of the churches through the authority of his ordinances: then indeed he might see in what respect the secrets of heaven were disclosed to him for his conveyance of them to mankind, and discern his divine power to settle such constitutions on earth, as should be
ratified

ratified in heaven. But that he could not at present perceive that his ministry under the Messiah was altogether of a spiritual nature, was owing to the same secular passions, which in an after age, occasioned the most pernicious and contemptible perversion of this memorable passage. Did we not sometimes see the obstinacy of man to reject a displeasing light, and the frantic efforts of human passion to stand *fatally* firm against the *half-seen* admonition of reason; were we not still too often mortified by beholding this miserable depravity of human nature; it were incredible that the episcopal successors of Peter should, upon the strength chiefly of the text which is before us, have appropriated to themselves the privileges, which are clearly assigned only to the *person* of the Apostle; or with him have misinterpreted them into a kind quite foreign to the whole tenor of christian doctrine.

The ingenuous mind will not easily spare, from its internal evidences of christianity, the candid report in the holy gospel of St. Peter's merits and demerits. It demands a more particular discussion, than *perhaps* it has yet received; it may be found also, that the discussion

cussion will tend to abate the impetuosities of an honest zeal, and the secret self-complacencies of a luke-warm discretion, and guard each character from the vices to which it tends. But the recorded errors of the Apostles, the more illustrate the sinless perfection of our blessed Lord; and prepare us for a superior veneration of the apostolical character, when after his ascent into heaven, it appears in a correcter and more glorious form, suitably to its new burthen of holy cares, and the necessity that the Apostles then become the principal teachers, should become the brightest examples of christianity.

For what is christianity, but a divine command to men, to qualify themselves for heaven, by a heavenly conversation on earth? and as it reprobates a secular spirit, as a littleness of desire and pursuit beneath the faculties and destination of the human soul, so it claims no secular power for its disciples as such.

Yet till human governments can release man from an obligation to obey the governor of the universe, abolish the truth of christianity, vote down the existence of a future state, annul the difference between right and wrong, do
away

away by a decree the blindness of passion, prove a moral conscience useless to the good order of society, discover nothing to have made all things, and hope for a permanent establishment upon the principles of selfishness, inhumanity and impiety, dishonour and dishonesty—it behoves the powers on earth to cultivate an alliance with christianity, to lend it all their honourable aid, and to act entirely upon its principles; for these are able to mend a nation as well as a man, to effect the needed *purification* of the political character, to abolish contention, guard equity, foster benevolence, enlarge by reciprocal kindness the blessings of each community, *exalt each by righteousness*, and suppress that spirit of secular ambition, which is as unfavourable to the real dignity of the one great community, and wide-dispersed brotherhood of mankind, as this poor form of ambition is to man *individually* considered. Christ came into the world to make the *whole* world as a city at unity in itself, to introduce peace within its wide walls, and plenteousness within its spacious dwellings, by the operation of universal courtesy and kindness; for then will be brought into
harmonious

harmonious play all the separate powers, and into general use all the countless blessings, which more or less stand apart, in this one extensive and diversified habitation of man. The omnipotence of God is always the agent of his goodness, and this is the policy of the *all-wise* Governor of the universe. Shall then any form of human power hope to be *great* upon any other plan than that of being *godlike*? no—let us not *deign* to become the idolaters of the God of this world; nor let us *dare* to worship this *golden calf* in the room of the Lord God Omnipotent.

These appear to me but rational deductions from the general view of christianity, and not improperly interposed in the course of observations on a passage of holy scripture, which peculiarly condemns the sinfulness of placing our *hearts* there, where our *treasures* can never be found; and of preferring, during the short and precarious tenure of this *wintry* life, the insufficient warmth, the *partial*, the momentary blaze of a *few thorns*, to the possession of heaven, where the peculiar presence of God himself shall be an *universal* warmth

to animate us with eternal health, and an *universal* light to cheer us with everlasting joy.

When our Lord had pronounced his benediction on Peter, and predicted his future situation in the christian church, he then commanded the Apostles to tell no man that he was *the Christ*. Not *merely*, I should think, lest the people should make him their king, nor yet *merely* lest the Pharisees should apprehend him before his time: it is not for us to know *all* his reasons. The light of truth (like that of the sun), comes on *gradually*: and it is a fact too that Christ, even on earth, was visibly above the power of man. When the soldiers came with their swords and staves to *force* him to the national tribunal—he but *looked* at them, and they fall back to the ground. He *went*, it is true, to their tribunal, for there, O blessed Jesus, didst thou go for our sake, but when there, thou wert the trier of thy accusers, and *already* the judge of thy judges.—All the created powers of the universe could not, *against his will*, have touched a hair of his sacred head: and therefore though he seemed *led* to the slaughter, thither he willingly went with a lamb-like meekness,

meekness, and therefore, *came up with acceptance on God's altar.**

His divine power was more or less disclosed as suited his heavenly purposes; he accommodates to the infirmities of man; tries and exercises his virtue; only puts him in the *way of Faith*, and means not to *drag* but *draw* him into *duty*: he knows his own times, and seasons, and motives; what to do as a present example, and what to provide for the future exigences of his kingdom in all ages.

And now behold him humanely preparing the minds of his Apostles for his sufferings and death; instructing them thereby in the *spiritual* nature of his kingdom; shewing them the example which they should follow; and exhibiting such an instance of divine tranquillity upon this interesting occasion, as to furnish us with a fact, and that so recorded with all the greatness of resembling simplicity and modesty, that we cannot but discern a divine excellency in the fact, and a divine spirit in the record. As it is not always proper to say some things *directly*, which yet may not be without their use in this age, I

* Isaiah lx. 7.

shall endeavour to suggest them, by adding a few more observations upon the character of our Lord; but such observations, I trust, as are calculated to shew that *He* was not of a secular spirit, and that such as are, cannot be *his*.

All the fields of theology, however cultivated by human ability, cannot produce such precious instruction as the frequent study of our Saviour's acts and sayings. Such an employment carries us into the region of primitive and uncorrupted truth, and at the same time presents to us the criterion of all conduct, and every character, with the touchstone of all times, and with an antidote against every evil fashion resulting from the successive variations of human folly.

The first idea of our blessed Lord which presents itself (and what so worthy to present itself *first*?) is that of his perfect freedom from every selfish bias. But this virtue of benevolence (attended, as might be expected, with the *gentler* moral qualities most allied to it) was also purified and guarded, ennobled, and in the highest degree exalted, by the utmost temperance and fortitude, justice and piety. His manners were a perfect medium
between

between the extremes of austerity and levity; for he was correct without rigour, easy without remissness, great without effort, and generous without ostentation. We are therefore taught by this *beautiful* example to avoid, in this region of sorrow, a stoical repression of the humaner passions; but we are taught also, by this *august* Guardian of everlasting Truth, to display at times (as an instance will soon occur) the utmost energy and sublimity of moral indignation. His very language (for language is an essential article in the discovery of character, and the advancement of human happiness) is all of a piece with his other excellencies; it is neither a flimsy address to the imagination, a boisterous application to the passions, or a frigid appeal to the reason; it is conceived by wisdom, made public by fortitude, and directed by discretion to accomplish the purposes of benevolence. Upon the whole, it is a manly and natural appeal to the *whole* man, and such as always expresses fearlessness without ferocity, simplicity exempt from rudeness, and the utmost sincerity in alliance with benign affections.

In short, our blessed Saviour, consistent in word and deed, appears no other than what he was, a being of unspeakable glory, descended upon this earth to accomplish the means of salvation for its successive inhabitants; and to this great multitude, (oh! how great an one shall it be at the day of judgment!) he seems at once, more united by benevolence than man ever was to man; and yet in the superiority of his moral and intellectual qualities (I speak not of his *divine power*), he appears, as it were, standing *alone* among *all* men; and whilst his heavenly goodness leads him (according to the Prophet's pathetic imagery), to nurse the lamb in his bosom, yet in the mean time, he ranks above the whole human race, as the shepherd does above his flock. Whatever he does or says, refers always to the good of his charge; *reviled, he revileth not again*; he has no interests of his own in this world; if he sometimes spoke *as one having authority*, he did not so speak because he had authority, but because the display of it was useful to others; and if he smites the stray sheep, the blow is
given

given for the sake of the example, or to reduce the wanderer home.

For instance, when he met the occasional infirmities of Peter and his apostolical brethren with an instructive severity of reproof, it was for *their* benefit, as it is recorded for *ours*.

When our blessed Saviour had made his Apostles acquainted with his future sufferings, death, and resurrection, Peter, ever *foremost* in speech and affection, *took him and began to rebuke him*. What a description this of disappointed ambition! passion here pays its usual tax in folly, for Peter has forgotten that our Saviour predicted his resurrection, as well as sufferings and death; predicted that resurrection which was to be the pledge and *first fruits* of *immortality* to the whole human race, and a hint of that triumphal entry into heaven by the great *Captain of our Salvation* and his redeemed *myriads*, the very *prospect* of which must render contemptible the proudest conception of any *temporal* pomp and triumph. But such is now the misapprehension of Peter and his apostolical brethren respecting the Messiah's office, that the utmost force of re-

prehensive speech seems necessary for the correction of the apostolical mind.

The *desire of all nations* is now actually come into his holy temple, has been glorified at his birth by the angelic hallelujahs, and been acknowledged at his baptism, by God himself, as *the Son in whom he was well pleased*. The old habits of the human mind are now to be changed, men are now called to repentance, and are now to be rescued from the dominion of *fight* into that of *faith*, and a *lively hope of the inheritance that fadeth not away*. The Apostles have acknowledged Jesus to be *the Christ*: but shall the Jew be taught to spurn at the vanities of Time, and to become heavenly-minded, merely by being taught that Jesus is the Christ, and that this Christ now present, is to tread in the steps of an Alexander or a Cæsar, and at the expence of human blood to restore the freedom and glories of Jerusalem? But *evidently*, the Messiah's kingdom is to be first divulged by the chosen Apostles; and as they now understand it, it would *now* be preached in such a manner, as would more and more narrow the narrowed heart of man, and deepen the dark
die

die of human infirmity. But they might as well be the ministers of Mahomet, as teach the doctrines of a Messiah under their present misconceptions of the office: but if *here* by the peculiar ministers of Christ the bulwark is not raised against *the world, the flesh, and the devil*—the kingdom of Satan must still stand, the Messiah seems to have been predicted, the Messiah seems to have appeared in vain. Surely then the rectification of the apostolical mind in this important article, seemed necessary for the greatest purpose imaginable: it was therefore done, and in a manner that must be felt by all men who would see the truth *as it is in Christ Jesus*, when our Lord (after having previously *turned about and looked angrily on his disciples*), said unto Peter—*get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.*

These words are so clear and so awful, that they neither require, or will justify a *cool* comment upon them: it is true that they were *once* addressed to Peter, yet, recorded as they are by the Holy Spirit, they still speak to every man, till he shall appear at the judgment

ment feat of Christ, and account for the impression which they have made upon him.

To reinstate reason upon its throne; to sink the imagination and passions into their proper state of vassalage; to open the views of man into eternity; to reduce his exorbitant desires of things temporal; and to explain and ratify the one only rule of a right conduct; and supply the requisite means and motives for the practice of it, and acquisition of its principal end, *the utmost happiness of man*—are the glorious offices of our divine religion.

And if we consult reason, the deductions of the wisest men in all ages, what we can learn of the times past, and what we know, or see, or *feel* in our own times—we are more and more forced to acknowledge that man is mean, and foolish, and miserable, in the proportion that he is immoderately affected towards this world. Suitably therefore to his wisdom, benevolence, and divine dignity, the universal Saviour and lawgiver of mankind, has in terms (which he knew the Holy Spirit would perpetuate), in terms of the utmost imaginable energy, almost (I may say) *chastised* his Apostles, and surely their successors in the holy ministry

ministry, into the most awful dread of a secular spirit. Less, he could not expect from either, foreseeing the miraculous powers that would attend the former, and the general situation of the latter, whom he foresaw enabled, upon the whole, in all ages, by leisure and education, to cultivate a character of the utmost purity, generosity, and sublimity of mind, respecting the interests of this world. And he could not but also foresee, that in the nature of things, such a discharge of duty, and such important services done to mankind, would in *general* secure to them all the comforts and honours, which in a state of probation, should satisfy a manly, reasonable, and religious mind.

But the more forcibly to impress a sense of their duty upon his especial ministers, our blessed Lord turns from the Apostles, and through the people then present, addresses *all* men to the same holy purport.

Whether therefore we consider these sacred transactions, or look inwards upon ourselves, our noble aspirations, our capacities of a vaster happiness than this life can afford, our reason so acute to detect the vanity of earthly good, and our thoughts and desires that *wander*
through

through all eternity; or whether bounding our observations within this life, we perceive infirmity in every step, and the course concluding in death or oblivion—we must rise (with the wiser part of the heathen world itself), and therefore rise upon the wing of *reason* itself, into the utmost contempt of this life; and are therefore naturally prepared for the *divine* ratification of this sentiment. But when we receive it in that awful form in which it was conveyed to us through his Apostles, by God himself—the deduction of reason improves into an alarming admonition, and the alarm increases when turning from the Apostles, and the sacred order, represented by them, from the *salt*, and the *light of the world*, from *these cities built on a hill*—he calls the people, and in them all the generations to come: and thus addresses them—

Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world

world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

S E R M O N VII.

H E B R E W S xii. 1, 2.

Wherefore, seeing we also are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

INCONSIDERATION and *infidelity* are the chief causes of the ruin of man, by precluding the effect of consideration, faith, and a *religious* * indifference to the *things of sight*, which is a life of righteousness.

* Also a *rational* one, and termed by Cicero, when philosophizing, *despicientia humanarum rerum*; in the furtherance of which upon solid ground the Stoics Seneca, Antoninus, and Epictetus may be read with the utmost profit and delight, as no mean supporters of Christian precept.

ness.

ness. Between this and its causes nothing is intermediate, for every movement of the human will, as it respects morals, either regards speculation or action.* Repentance, which is nothing if it is not reformation, is a form of virtuous activity, and is that part of it which in nature follows upon faith and consideration, leads on *all* the habits of righteousness, and therefore *now* claims our attention after the preceding view† of its causes.

We

* When Cicero says, *omnis virtus in actione consistit*, he makes a very useful remark; but yet we must be careful not to misinterpret him, by entertaining too narrow an idea of action. When speculation is a mere selfish indulgence *immoderately* pursued, it is to be distinguished from *virtuous action*; but when a man *willingly considers*, and cultivates faith, in order to virtuous action, speculation itself then becomes a part of that action *in which virtue consisteth*; it is a branch, though a different branch, of moral merit; it is founded in will, it is a noble exertion, and a *chosen* instrument of good to mankind.

† Not a complete view, nor intended to be such; for we do not now preach by the *hour-glass*, and nothing can be urged home, or *discussed*, if every part of the subject is to be introduced within the modern limits. A discussion of a great subject takes in much, and requires a *formal* order to prevent a confused view of it—it looks altogether like an address to the *intellect* solely; it is not a direct charge to practise, it is not a natural expression
of

We cannot *consider* and *believe* the holiness of God, his eternal rewards, the dispensation of a redeemer, mediator, and final judge, and the frailty of man; and not immediately say to

of zeal in the speaker, and its effects on the hearer are the conviction of his understanding only, and no more—but this is not enough: the imagination and passions are a part of man, and to these too an application must be made for the furtherance of virtuous action. If every thing is said upon a subject which belongs to it, much will be said that is *well known*, and the hearer's attention must occasionally languish. From the days of Sanderfon to Tillotson, men took more interest in a religious discourse than now, and the scholastic method was not unacceptable; but be it remembered, that it was *then* accompanied with the warmest applications to the times, and with all the fervors of the sublimest piety. May I without offence observe, that if the rationality of *their* manner has been since preserved, their affectionate warmth has in general been lost; and if their successors have more concinnity of period, they have less force and appositeness of expression. Much of excellency has imperceptibly slid out of our hands, and can be recovered only by the diligent perusal of these great masters.—As I presume not to make any observations but with a view chiefly to those of my own profession who are in their first outset, let me take this opportunity of recommending to them a practice which will be of use to themselves and society;—let them not be afraid of reading *our* elder divines on account of their antiquated style, for he that is in the habit of reading modern books, will be kept sufficiently steady to the modern language. The first father of rational divinity who cleared his way out of the

to ourselves 'repent.' We cannot determine that the *one* law of conduct, prescribed by religion and reason, is the very best for the advancement of our happiness throughout time

the points, and puns, and mystical babbling of the preceding age, was Bishop Sanderson. None of his successors seem to have been more diligent than he was to throw meaning into every *particle* of speech. His Compendium of Logic, however excellent, will not make so good a logician, as the careful perusal of his sermons will. There is such a judicious exactness in his use and explication of scripture, as must teach his young reader this important habit, if any writer can. The ethical writers, poet, or philosopher of Pagan and classical antiquity, are *drawn* and not *pressed* into his service (but in this article Bishop Taylor is his equal), and thereby in this deluge of books of modern invention, the clerical reader will be often profitably recalled to the *ideas* of admirable men, many of whose works he perused when it was difficult to him to understand their *words*. He will at the same time be taught by this modest academician, plain good man, and exquisite scholar, to remember the great object of his profession—and to bend all his studies towards, and to concentrate all his professional exertions on, the improvement of his own times, for he will continually observe to what this truly-christian Bishop always *points*. When he has made himself a master (say) of one discourse, and approves the subject for present use, he will probably not think himself ill-advised, should any one recommend it to him, to turn to its abstract prefixed to the sermons, and from that alone, to write it anew, with due accommodation to the present language and times.

time as well as eternity—and not see cause for *immediate* repentance, should we see cause for *any*; for surely he that is sensible he has lost this road, and that he is every moment in danger of being way-layed and destroyed by Death, will not judge it right to lose a

Bishop Smalridge's sermons are also published with their abstracts, and though the same specified advantages are not to be derived from this excellent Divine as from Bishop Sanderfon, yet perhaps it may be said of him, that he is equal to Archbishop Secker in the gravity, and superior to him in the flowing majesty of his style. Though the former has written, and most valuably, to the closet—such were his powers of a dignified, fervent, and pathetic elocution, that his short and plain diction seemed so expanded and elevated by his manner and good sense, that he had the less occasion to assist himself by the arts of language—others must do as they can.

I have sometimes wished that the valuable sermons of Dr. Whichcot, published by Lord Shaftesbury, with a pertinent and proper preface, were all of them modernised, for they all deserve it; and I know not how a *young* Divine can serve himself and society better than by thus recalling, as it were into life, such excellent works as are buried in the dust of modish fastidiousness.

The above clerical exercises were *early* recommended to me by one of the most learned and worthy Prelates of this age (Bishop Newton), one who noticed me when a child, and was my patron when a man—he was my *friend* indeed—ever attentive, kind, honourable, and manly; but he was such also to his King and country, and the generations to come.

moment

moment in recovering it: in other words, he will judge it right to repent with all speed.*

These truths *duly* considered and believed *oblige* us to repent; and without their *full* efficacy upon our minds, we yet seem always

* Dr. Barrow in his sermon upon repentance, pursues this argument with great felicity of illustration and reasoning. The important argument above-mentioned, upon a subject so important as repentance, has (if my memory does not deceive me) been too much neglected by his most illustrious successors in the theological line. This argument obliquely recommends virtue by painting it; addresses with the utmost force the common sense of men, and makes their very *pride* the instrument of *humbling* them into penitence. It is the most inoffensive method of convincing the impenitent they are *fools*. This was the great line of Barrow. His opening sermon upon wisdom, augured the succeeding excellency of his discourses in this line. He was no orator, but he was something more: he has neither the arrangements, the reliefs, the climaxes of the orator, but he includes *orations* in paragraphs, he spreads out a hemisphere of truths; by *exposition* does the business of *address*; and without the fervors and flippancies of fancy—by a wide view of things and their relations, he comes into the possession of similitudes abundant, and yet never outstretched beyond their point; and being frank, fearless, and pious, he without vanity undertakes to express himself upon subjects, that one would think out of the reach of all expression; but his humility is exalted by the success of his undertaking, as may be seen in the sermons upon wit, preached before Charles II. and his crew of irreligious *scorners*.

to carry with us an opinion that repentance is necessary on our part: for it was an opinion readily entertained by man, before Christ as a *teacher* and *sufferer*, gave the last enforcement and importance to this duty.

When He, *that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias*, came, and said, *prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*, he seemed in effect to *declare*, that some degree of virtue was preparatory to faith; and he seemed also in effect to *insinuate*, that virtue was the end of faith.

The first gospel-duty presented to our mind, is that of repentance, and the necessity of *good works* is thus urged upon our attention with the utmost solemnity. Reason cannot but note the circumstance, and consulting its own conceptions must find their accord with the first dawnings of *divine* truth, and be encouraged to regard its *progress*. When the whole system is spread before its view, it seems reducible into the following address from God to man.

“ Come unto me my children, who are
“ heavy laden with your human frailties,
“ follies, and trespasses, take my easy yoke
“ upon you, obey your Father’s reasonable
“ will;

“ will; ye cannot but be sensible of its rea-
 “ sonableness, and thence ingenuously sorry
 “ for your hitherto ungrateful disobedience to
 “ your kindest parent; love then my will,
 “ follow my clear and manifold instructions
 “ for right conduct, and give me your hearts
 “ (which it would be unnatural in you not to
 “ give *me*), and I in return will give you
 “ *heaven*—for I will bestow upon you after
 “ the reign of Death and Time, *fullness of joy*
 “ *at my right hand for evermore*; and even
 “ during your present short space of *trial*,
 “ more peace and contentment, than your
 “ disobedience to me can possibly procure
 “ you.”

But this surely is a conduct in the universal
 Father, expressive of the true parental *kind-
 ness*; and is it not also expressive of the utmost
 parental *dignity*? herein is no weak fondness
 contemptibly lavished upon wilful and wicked
 children; but the best conduct of which man
 is capable, is expected, is demanded by their
 Master, by their Father, by their Creator, by
 their *God*. This is *divine* dignity—but *mercy
 and justice kiss each other*. The pitiable weak-
 ness of man is pitied; sincere repentance is

accepted in lieu of an uniform righteousness ; —heaven is the reward. Then surely heaven itself is not more superior to earth, than the kindness of our heavenly Father to that of the best earthly.

But did man always know that God would be thus kind to him? he certainly could not, unless God himself told him: for his reason surely would have found it difficult to *prove*, that the most uniform and utmost good conduct of man for the short period of this life, could entitle him to an *everlasting* reward. But when man *rebels* against the supreme Governor, reason cannot possibly encourage him to expect that repentance would so reinstate him in the divine favour, as to place his claims upon the line of those who had never rebelled against God. Such a reward is in itself so much an act of the divine grace, as that reason could not hope for it, but upon the grounds of the divine discovery and promise. The mere philosopher, untaught by divine revelation says, ‘ I will begin to do *now* what ‘ I ought to have done *before*, and sorrowing ‘ for what is past, hope to escape the punishment of *rebellion*.’ But what the christian
can

can *now* say upon the subject of repentance must oblige him to own, that repentance is *at length* become through the divine grace such a blessing, such a resource, such a deliverer, such a new Creator as it were to one *dead* in sin, shame, and misery—that the wretched situation is not now to be imagined, from which he that can (and every one can) lay hold upon the arm of Repentance may not be rescued. But I ask pardon of Repentance for this inadequate description of her power—she can turn darkness into light—and misery into felicity. Such is Repentance when Christ commands us to repent, and such is the goodness of God in the report of him who is *one with the Father*.*

Therefore we christians cannot but consider repentance as an act which it were madness to omit, or even to postpone, if we consider the uncertainty of human life. Sorrow for sin, which naturally precedes reformation of life (and when it really causes it, becomes then, but not till then, true christian repentance),

* Let the rejecter of Christianity ponder this truth, and examine whether he can discover the like in the *horn-book* of reason.

is greater or less according not only unto the temper and passion, but also the knowledge of men. Hence the necessity of faith and religious consideration: for as it is our duty to seek for this knowledge by all the means in our power, and is a part of that righteousness, wanting which no one shall *see God*, when to see him, is to enter into the possession of *pleasures at his right hand for evermore*;—so for the sake of this life, such knowledge is the requisite means of accomplishing that *godly* conduct which with its own increase increaseth our best *profit in things temporal*. Besides, this occupation of the mind by right ideas, and of our time by right exercises, quite foreign to *worldly* habits, weakens by degrees their force, and places us in the state prescribed unto us by sound reason and true religion. Nor will it be useless to observe, that in such a state we enjoy, more than in any other, that happiness for which we are chiefly dependant upon God and ourselves:*

and

* See that admirable essay of Lord Clarendon, entitled, "*Reflections upon the happiness which we may enjoy in and from ourselves*." A man must be sometimes alone; and if he is
habitually

and therefore rejoicing more and more in the privileges of virtue, we shall proportionally be ashamed of our past transgressions, increase that moral tenderness of soul which is most apt to prevent their recurrence, nor be displeased to find it a sensation far from miserable, unless it is misery for a beloved, an ingenuous, and erring child to lean upon the breast of an embracing mother, to weep for its past misbehaviour, and as fast as it weeps to receive forgiveness and consolation, and the best instructions for future good conduct.

Men will grieve for sin, as sin, in the proportion as they understand the nature of it and their own guiltiness, and in the proportion too as they are naturally more or less

habitually estranged from the powers of enjoying solitude, he must be sometimes very miserable. This will impel him into the farther pursuit of social dissipation—still he will have his intervals of misery, he will be found sometimes to think upon that moment which dissolves all his connections with this world and its inhabitants; and then his anxious thoughts will extend themselves into that *hereafter from which no traveller returns*, or he will start back with horror at the idea of annihilation—but if he does neither—is he a man? Let him *commune with God in his chamber, and be still, let him acquaint himself with God, and be at peace.* There is no other course for a man.

capable

capable of the passion of sorrow. It is not to be conceived that a man will wrench himself out of evil habits without some sorrow on account of them. Reformation is not to be supposed probable without some preceding sorrow;—sorrow therefore is necessary as a natural means—it is necessary too as a proper expression of duty to God. Neither christianity nor common sense will allow us to dispense with a sorrowful sense and humble confession of guilt.—This truth is so manifest as a reasonable and christian doctrine, that I need not say any thing more upon it. It is more useful to fix our chief attention upon the great end of repentance, if it may not be rather called the chief part of it—which is reformation of life, the *new man in Christ Jesus*.

The portion of scripture now recommended to your serious attention, includes in a small compass, and in a very elegant form, the strongest conceivable arguments for repentance; such arguments as none but a christian can conceive, and yet he can conceive no higher for the very serious purpose which St. Paul had in view.

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It was in his time in practice among the most famous and civilized nations, to have certain public games and races, which were celebrated with great pomp and concourse of spectators, and accounted so illustrious, that men of the very highest rank and personal estimation thought it honourable to present themselves to the contest. St. Paul elegantly insinuates, that the race we are to run is the most splendid and glorious, in comparison with all other modes of life: it is to them as the most famous and solemn races of antiquity were to all others. But why (says the animated and exquisite orator, with all the graces of imagery and with all the force of good sense), should ye be fearful of entering into this noble contest? do ye doubt your ability to accomplish your course? oh! fear not—men like you have already ran it—and won the prize. They are a great multitude, they are a *cloud* of witnesses; they in a manner compass you about—who knows but that they may be actually your spectators, and among those *angels* that shall rejoice over your repentance. Fear not then, but do as others, like you, have already done; and encouraged by
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their example, and their rewards, press forwards after them, towards the same prize of your one high calling. But as they who on earth commence a bodily race, disencumber themselves of all needless weight and entanglements of clothing—so in this great spiritual contest with the world, the flesh, and the devil—lay aside every spiritual weight, and the sin that most easily besets you. But what is this weight, and what is this sin? Every thing is this weight, which is a weight to every man in his course towards the eternal goal, in his progress towards heaven. Have ye not heard, that ye cannot at once serve God and Mammon? that ye cannot be alike in obedience to these two as *masters*? Let Mammon then, let the world then, bow down to its Maker—use it as your convenience, as your slave—but be the Lord God your only Lord, be his law your only rule, and his will yours—and when ye actually feel that ye are superior to the pride, and the pleasures, and the cares of this life—ye have then laid aside that weight, which is to the soul of a more dreadful nature than the mill-stone, which fastened to the neck, drags the body to the bottom of the sea.

sea. I cannot be too serious when I am addressing you upon so solemn a subject, and therefore thoroughly to impress myself as well as you, I have added the image of *Christ* to that of St. Paul. Indeed my brethren, the love of this world is such a weight, that it is as a mill-stone to which our necks are fixed: I mean to say this, that if we are not habitually conscious of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and of placing our prime happiness in the approbation of God and our own conscience, we cannot run the heavenly race which is set before us. I mean too to say, that this is the art of possessing this world for the purposes even of temporal happiness. The wages of iniquity are small. God is the most bountiful master, and his little here, with godliness, is the great gain. It is ease, and pure pleasure, and genuine dignity sprinkled all over with the ever-cheering hopes of eternal felicity. Ye see then the weight which we must not allow to burthen us in our christian race; but the admirable instructor St. Paul reminds us more especially of the sin which so easily befalls us.

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There are certain temptations which at all times are apt to allure all men—but each man in his own peculiar circumstances or constitution of nature, has his special temptations to evil. Whether that temptation be to anger, or envy, or cowardice, or sensuality, or pride—or whatever it be—here let us particularly assemble our forces of defence, and as a preliminary step, search ourselves, and cultivate self-knowledge with our utmost diligence. Good heavens! how few know themselves: it seems the most difficult knowledge in the world. And why—because we see few that do know themselves. A sad proof that few study themselves. The knowledge is easy enough when a man is in good earnest to enter upon his heavenly race, he will then bestir himself to lay aside every impeding weight, and be quick to see the sin that so easily besets him.

Arrived at this knowledge, and delivered of these encumbrances, we have still need of patience, it is still a race of contest and struggle. And now hear St. Paul again, and judge whether he knows how to address you as men, as beings compounded of reason, imagination, and passion.

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It seems to me that the ideas of this holy and admirable Saint may be thus explained for our edification, and encouragement in fighting the good fight, and in running the glorious race of christians.

Why should I talk to you, by way of encouragement and shewing the practicability of a righteous conduct, of those merely human worthies who have gone before you; of men whose excellency was such that the mean and wretched world was not worthy of them; who in the cause of everlasting truth and righteousness did not merely resist the ordinary temptations of mankind, but patiently passed a life of persecution, and fearlessly met Death, though Death came armed with tortures—why should I rest my doctrine and argument solely upon their conduct, though no argument can be more satisfactory, complete, and perfect for my purpose (it is strong enough to divide your spirits asunder with conviction, if ye duly weigh it)—for what, in general, are your sufferings to the trials of those eminent Martyrs, who yet were but men as you are, and had but the same reason to love and trust the Lord your God as you have, if they had
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the same, for indeed unto you more abundant mercies have been revealed in Christ Jesus : to you therefore I am supplied with means of more powerful exhortations to run the race which is set before you.

It is your privilege to look unto Jesus the author, or leader (by his *prophetic* office), and the finisher (by his *regal*) of your faith. Think then of Him—who was also your example in running the glorious race prescribed to all his followers. His goal, and his great reward were in view. He sprang forwards to his heavenly prize. What though the ignominious and torturing cross was before him—he willingly endured its tortures—and he despised its shame. So far he hath acted as our example, and hath given us a perfect image of our duty.—But now comes the weight of the apostolical argument—ye will now see why we should be cheered in our race, by considering Christ not only as the leader, but as the finisher of our faith—not only as the forerunner, but as the rewarder of our race.—Lo! this our example of patience and righteous exertion is now in the possession of that joy which was set before him, and in
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a situation to reward his faithful followers—for he is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. I will not insult your common sense by shewing you what an encouragement to well-doing is included in this description of our Redeemer's and Mediator's present state and exaltation, nor diminish the dignity of these apostolical exhortations to repentance by any farther arguments which my imperfect understanding can furnish. *Seeing then ye are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset you, and run with patience the race which is set before you—looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

S E R M O N VIII.

St. MATTHEW xxii. 37. 38. 39. 40.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

WHEN *Consideration, Faith in Jesus Christ, and Repentance* have had this effect upon us, that we are determined to exchange our past habits for new and better—we naturally not only seek for our new rule in the gospel of our divine Master, but as naturally begin this inquiry by adverting to the most summary

summary and comprehensive view of duty which it exhibits, and then we afterwards proceed to the more minute descriptions of christian conduct. But ye will readily agree with me—that the holy scripture now repeated to you, includes the most general view of human duty, and for this reason, because *on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*. Therefore these two commandments are of such importance that we shall only now consider the former, and shall enter immediately into a subject that cannot but interest above all others the heart of man. It is this—Whether *created* man should love his *Creator, with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind?*

In vain had our blessed Lord been successively assailed by the entangling questions of the Pharisees and Sadducees. When the subtlest malice is opposed to truth and wisdom, firmness and good-temper, it is of course conquered, as it was upon this occasion. But though convinced, convicted, conquered, it becomes the more hostile, till it can soften into ingenuous penitence: for hatred is then wound to its utmost height, and its

last strongest effort is urged against the detested object. It must seem strange to you, ye christians, that the benevolent Christ could ever be this detested object, but such he seems to have been to the subtle Pharisees—when one of them (without doubt, speaking for the rest) put the following question to him—*Master, which is the great commandment in the law?* It was a question which they vainly thought he could not either safely or wisely answer: but what are the thoughts of *man*, when drawn out in battle array against eternal truth, and the wisdom of *God*? The answer given was a rejected instruction, and it was given in terms adapted to soften the hardest heart, and to subdue the proudest, for it closed with great majesty when *the superstitious Pharisees* were taught, that *on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*. The wisdom of the Omniscient beamed out upon this occasion for the benefit of all mankind; the *innocence of the Dove*, always looking at Truth, seasonably then brought it forth with all the *wisdom of the Serpent*; and the Holy Spirit has recorded for the use of all ages the most important instruction that *man* can
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can receive from *God*: for it is no less than a divine and everlasting ratification of this great truth—that religion is founded in the *love of God*, and that all its several branches are to arise from this one root.

Religion then has its foundation in the good affections, and whatever we derive from the understanding as a light to action, we ought habitually to act upon the motive of love. Such is true religion, and thus *easy* is the *yoke of Christ*. The love of the Lord our God is to be the most powerful and constant law of our conduct, and this love is to be in the highest degree of which we are capable—for *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy mind*. It seems impossible for language to bring this duty into our view and reverence with more strength and perspicuity; and we may view it (whether we consider the speaker, or the thing spoken) as one of those passages in holy scripture, which, considered by itself, carries along with it all the support and illustration which are necessary.

We are therefore at liberty to examine the grounds of our gratitude to God for this

divine declaration, and to discuss such points as may facilitate our discharge of this important duty, and quicken our obedience to this first and great commandment.

For this purpose ye will naturally inquire in what respects the Lord our God is the object of our highest love ; ye will then soon determine that He can only be so on account of his *goodness* ; ye will then as naturally ask yourselves, whether the *divine* goodness differs from that of *man* in any other respects than *degree* ; ye will then examine the proofs of the divine goodness respecting man ; and when the result of this examination is, that the positive benefactions of God to man entitle him to our utmost love, ye will prudently and reverently consider in what this love consists.

Such then is the order of the following discourse, and ye must expect that my thoughts upon the several great topics which compose it, can only be a few hints, humbly submitted to your own discussion, enlargement, and improvement.

And FIRST,—Holy scripture, narrowly and ignorantly interpreted by spiritual pride,
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or a hard heart, or a melancholy one, has induced too many christians so to describe the ends for which God created man, and all things—that creation appears the act of Omnipotent selfishness; and therefore, if admitted as such, could not possibly procure the love of an *ingenuous* heart either to that Being so *misrepresented*, or any reverence to those scriptures which are only *imagined* to contain such a misrepresentation. But, believe me, it has been repeatedly proved, that the holy scriptures are in truth holy, by containing a very different view of Deity; and that they justify Reason in this conclusion—that God created to communicate happiness, and gratify his goodness.

Our Saviour himself decides this question, when he says, *there is none good but God*, or in other words, that his goodness is as supremely excellent and transcendent as his power, wisdom, and other divine attributes: surely then he speaks consistently when he declares God to be the object of our *utmost love*? *Goodness only* is the proper object of love. Ye may *fear* omnipotence, ye may *reverence* perfect holiness, ye may *admire* omniscience,

but till ye admit the goodness of God, ye are in vain commanded by his blessed Son to love him. We can only advance the several passions in their natural courses, and towards their special and appropriated objects. God himself has appointed the bounds, and the places to this turbulent ocean, and he must stretch forth his right hand *miraculously*, would he change the direction which he has originally impressed upon it.

But we have a farther inducement to admit the goodness of God; for the religion solely founded in *fear* but increases human misery, and such a view of it, false as it is, in proportion as it is received, becomes hostile to that religion which is reported, with truth, to be founded in *love*: so that whether ye respect the *truth*, that is, the *actual* declaration of the divine will, or the happiness of mankind—ye will gladly see the possibility of practising that, which is the great commandment, and rejoice to acknowledge the *goodness* of God, in order to love him with *all your heart, soul, and mind*. When this *charity*, duly founded in *faith*, becomes of course, the means of your brightest *hope*—ye will then possess

possess that *perfect love which casteth out fear*—that *acquaintance with God*, whose end is consummate *peace*, and that ample spring which will not only distribute itself into all the channels of duty, but in such a manner, and through such a range of delight, as that ye will not only rejoice *always*, but more and more *in the Lord*, till at his right hand ye shall enjoy perfect pleasures for ever and ever. This only is that hope by which we overcome the world; and as it originates in the *great command*, so it ends in the great art of improving time into the means of acquiring a happy eternity.

But (SECONDLY) it is now proper to consider what goodness is, and to examine whether as it exists in intelligent beings, it differs in kind, or only in degree. Goodness seems to be the most perfect union of benevolence and beneficence. Mere benevolence, or mere good nature, is a natural provision in order to good action, or it is a natural warmth, without which this fruit is not to be expected. If it should be produced by mere principle and rectitude of intellect, it is the fruit of a cold season,

season, and will want its genuine flavour. So much for passion; but yet passion is still blind, and asks for the far-surveying eyes, the direction of reason. Reason then points the courses of benevolence, and its operation issues in beneficence. If by benevolence, *serving* you, I *injure* others, morality is wounded by the act; it is not a *good* act. I will venture to say, that goodness is the union of benevolence and beneficence; but by beneficence, I mean not so much positive effects as a rational exertion to produce them; and by benevolence, a sort of blind and instinctive inclination to do good; which is as necessary to make a man *active* to do good, as reason is to shew him *how*: therefore he only is a good man who employs his reason in the best manner which he can to increase his benevolence and direct his beneficence. But the utmost absurdities and evils would be the consequences, were we to think and talk of the divine goodness as different in *kind* from that of man's: for were this admitted, it would be something unintelligible to us; it would not either be the object of our joy or imitation. That God must be good, is acknowledged, however clumsily and inconsistently,

consistently, by them who oppugn his goodness by such delineations of him as *effectively* describe him far otherways than good. Hence their own manners become austere respecting other men; whilst at the same time, respecting themselves, they are elated with dangerous presumptions, or oppressed with horrible perturbations of fear. Christianity in the mean time is misrepresented to the ignorant, and and faith is precluded from ingenuous minds on account of phantasms exhibited by folly. How much in vain has Christ as yet said, *take my yoke upon you, for it is easy!* And though he delivered mankind from the operose *services* of the Mosaic law, too many have converted *the liberty of the sons of God* into a *servitude* to demons of melancholy which themselves have raised.

Since then we cannot rationally conceive but of one kind of goodness, and are obliged to behold it as the only moral quality which is specially the object of love, we must conceive of God's goodness as the same in kind with that of man's, though as much superior to it as the excellency of the Creator surpasses that
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of a creature, perhaps the lowest in the scale of moral and intelligent beings.

Therefore (THIRDLY) though the comments of human pride and folly, upon the actual appearance of misery in the world, may somewhat obstruct our cheerful view, and prevent our due acknowledgment of the divine goodness, yet it is still seen in proportion as reason *examines*, and acknowledged in proportion as religion *rules*. For a right understanding is *obliged* to behold in the many works of God as many proofs of his goodness; and religion, through *faith*, takes a still wider and sublimer view of his goodness; through *charity*, cannot easily believe that the fountain of all virtue is defective in love; and receives, through *hope*, the most affecting assurance that the *Lord is loving unto every man*, and that his *mercy is over all his works*.

Still however there remains so much corruption in human nature, that we are still called upon to defend the divine goodness, not only from the mistakes of the believer, but the captious objections of the infidel. The most material of these is, that the chief
miseries

miserics of man result from his free-agency, and therefore the Creator makes him liable to *evil*, by making him *free*. Methinks there is a very ready answer to this objection; and were there not, *man* must not lightly blame *God*, and assured in general of the divine goodness, presume to encourage any doubts of it, from his own inability to explain a *few* instances of the divine œconomy. But let us grant that the free-agency of man is the chief cause of his miseries; and also that many, from circumstances not under their own control, such as ill health, ill education, and the like, are destined, as it were, to be unhappy in this world: be it so, God surely can judge their cause, and God surely will judge righteously. And is not their pittance of time here but as a drop in the ocean of their eternal duration? And cannot God counter-balance their present unmerited evils? And is it not probable, that this short and early taste of afflictions will enhance their succeeding eternity of joy? Besides is a man aware of what he is doing, when he objects to free-agency as the possible means of evil to him? That he is then desirous of a situation in which
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an intelligent creature cannot shew any goodwill to his benevolent Creator. What—would he indeed request God to *force* him to be happy, and by the same compulsory influence, disable him from testifying his gratitude to his benefactor? Surely he will not *proudly* expect happiness in this form, and then as *meanly* wish to be upon the passive level of the brute beast, of the trodden dust. For if ye possessed the station of the cherubim and seraphim, and were exalted over all the hosts and hierarchies of heaven, and yet withal were not free-agents, could your hosannas to the Highest be at all more meritorious than the *instrumental* trumpet which is governed by the breath of a man? Such is the folly of them that would improve the Creator in the arts of creation, and teach the *Holy One* wisdom.

What if God himself were not free? he were then no more the God of Gods, and the Lord of Lords. Deny the existence of free-agency, and virtue is no more. Let necessity be every where omnipotent, and dignity can exist no where. The angels once fell, and therefore they were free. If free-agency has its evil, it has visibly its good;
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and one must of necessity conceive that the review of free-agency, well used on earth, must increase the joys of heaven. In a few words, without free-agency we cannot attest our good-will or obedience to God. Be our gift of love or obedience as nothing to *him*—still it is our gift, and a free tender of duty. Man is gratified, man is dignified in the ability of acting thus freely, but he will still remember from whom he receives this ability, and accordingly *love* God his *divine* benefactor in the highest degree, and in the same proportion glorify *the* great Creator, the only Lord of glory. Therefore free-agency is a proof of the divine goodness. But if to this gift of God, others are superadded—his assistant spirit to advance human virtue, directions, and discoveries from heaven itself to point out its courses, and animate its movements, and the merits of a Redeemer to purchase for man an eternity of happiness, the goodness of God must present itself in such a form before us, that we cannot but readily receive the commands of our divine Master, to love the Lord our God with *all* the heart, with *all* the soul, and with *all* the mind.

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But (FOURTHLY) this commandment from *heaven* only enforces the same truth which comes full into our view from all the works of God which are on *earth*, for all of them declare his goodness.

For whether we contemplate the fragrant and sightly vesture of the fields, or examine the latent qualities and arrangements of minerals, plants, and animal bodies, or the several means of gratifying our several senses, or the abundant joys resulting from the moral and social qualities, from the various walks of learning, from the inferior as well as the more exquisite and nobler arts, or bid our thoughts wander through all space and duration, and never finish their career till they spread within and without all the material universe, till they pass beyond the gates of Death and the barriers of Time, and lose themselves in the boundless, the real, and yet unimaginable glories of a blissful eternity—we shall find, and we shall *feel* reason to bless God for our animated, our intellectual, and our immortal existence, and to acknowledge, if we with our Saviour have our temptation in this wilderness, that we too with him have in a certain sense the angels of
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God to minister unto us. In short, we shall find no one truth more forcibly thrust upon our rational conviction and affectionate attention than this—that God only is good.

But (LASTLY) let us inquire in what the love of God consists. It seems unaccountable that there should ever be a dispute about it, for the relation of a dependant child to the wisest, worthiest, and kindest parent is an image, however imperfect, that readily and clearly enough teaches us *how* to love God, that only parent who is perfect in kindness, who never dies, who is for ever present, who is all-wise, and Almighty; who, in a few, but the most interesting words, is our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer: judge then whether he is not in the same manner with the best earthly parent, but in a far superior degree, the object of love. A great poet (who also was no mean divine), speaking of God, says,—“whom to *love* is to *obey*.” Love however is not obedience, but its cause, and obedience is but the necessary proof and requisite effect of love. It is unimportant to inquire whether God might not be obeyed

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from fear ;—fear is not precluded in the system of christianity, it is a part of it, but the greater principle, God be praised, is love, which is perfectly reconcileable with a filial fear of God, and strengthened by the union, produces a motive for right conduct, which is at once the most powerful and delightful that can influence the heart of a rational creature.

For (TO CONCLUDE) man would be happy, and man is a very dependant being ; if he turns any where for his primary comforts but to God, he laments the vanity of his confidence. In his day of health and prosperity he may seem to be happier than many, but he surely finds himself successively duped, and successively disappointed. Under the discouragements and calamities of life he would *acquaint himself with God. and be at peace* : it may be they vanish for a time, and God is no more in his thoughts. Events continually arise to individuals, and nations, that shew the dependance of man upon God. Whatever renders life a mysterious, disorderly, vain, and calamitous scene, is owing to the folly of man in chusing many masters instead of

of the only one. Let God be all in all to man, and in an instant order and simplicity prevail in human life, the present and the future periods become of a-piece, the only consolation for its few remaining evils is discovered and possessed;—and in the love of God that universal principle is acquired which is felt as happiness, which augments every form of happiness, which improves the individual, and which improves society; and which affectionately uniting men to their one common *Father*, as affectionately unites them into one happy *brotherhood*.

Whatever powers exist in men, and in nations, to serve the human race, they have no object nearly of such magnitude to awaken their utmost endeavours as the promotion of genuine piety, and the union of rational creatures in *heart*, and *soul*, and *mind*, with God. But among the guiltiest of all nations would be our's, were we satisfied with the present state of impiety which is gaining ground upon us; did we not more especially remember the loving kindness of God when he so graciously visited us in our late national affliction; and did we not fear not to find in all his mercies

vouchsafed unto us, and our forefathers motives and arguments (in addition to such as are *general* to all men) more than sufficient to induce us to hear with delight, and reverence, and obedience our blessed Lord when he commands us to love God with *all the heart, and all the soul, and all the mind*, for this indeed is the *first and great commandment*, on which hangs not only *all the law and all the prophets*, but all the wisdom, all the dignity, and all the happiness of man. This indeed is that link of love which only can unite earth to heaven, and bind together our several periods of existence in one harmonious and progressive system of never-ending happiness.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IX.

St. MATTHEW xxii. 37. 38. 39. 40.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

CAN we wonder at these exhortations to love God and man, when we consider the person that delivered them? Jesus, the benevolent Christ, the Saviour of mankind said these things, and with the utmost reason; not because he came from heaven to instruct us in the divine will, but because he did that

will on earth even as it was done in heaven. He surely might well be the most powerful teacher of love, who himself fed *his flock like a shepherd, gathered the lambs with his arm, carried them in his bosom, and gently led those that are with young.*

Benevolence is in truth one of those divine qualities which, however inimitable in its *perfection*, is a pattern we can imitate to a certain degree, and ought to transcribe as far as we possibly can. But then the benevolence of God, however taught and described by reason and religion, would surely be too transcendent as our example, were it not so familiarly exemplified by the *God incarnate*. Our feeble intellect is dazzled by the unmitigated glories of pure Deity, and only not blinded by that excess of light : but when we look up to God through the vail of Christ, and peruse the divine goodness in this Shepherd of the human race, we can behold it with more steadiness, comprehend it more correctly, see the very course of our procedure, and are at once instructed, allured, and excited to trace the footsteps of our glorious Master, Redeemer, and Judge,

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Would ye see his divine character exhibited in the shortest description, let Peter describe it, *He went about doing good.*—But Malachi, suitably to the prophetic manner, represents him as *the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings.*

His birth and station in life, his conversation and companions, his doctrines, miracles, and death were contrived in such a manner as to give the finishing blow to all the plausible pretensions of selfish pride.

One or two examples will suffice to illustrate and enforce these general remarks.

As an instance of this humble benignity, behold the humane Jesus raising from the dead the son, indeed the only son, of a poor widow. It is not enough to make the *widow's heart leap for joy*, by breaking the gates of death, dashing their bars asunder, and restoring her to the dearest union that seemed for ever dissolved—but as if he humbly sympathized (as he certainly did) with her joy, he himself, with the most benign tenderness, delivered the dear child into that breast and those arms which had nurtured and fondled it from its first appearance in life.

An humble household is in the utmost distress, affectionate sisters are bewailing the death of a worthy brother (for worthy he must have been since Jesus himself loved him) :— the benign Saviour is at hand, has formed his benevolent design, foresees the happy effects of it, weeps for joy, and bids Lazarus arise from the dead !

Thus you see how he adorned his doctrine of benevolence in all things, loving his neighbour as himself, and gracing his superior acts of benevolence by the union of those smaller ones—the most endearing, and humble courtesies. Memorable was his saying when he was in the agonies of death, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Recollect too what his last appearance was when he left this earth—he ascended in the very act of lifting up his hands upon the Apostles and blessing them. And is he not at this very instant, in a manner blessing all who are here present, by being at this instant our Mediator at the right hand of God ?

Surely then our hearts must glow within us when we hear him still saying to every man, *love your neighbour as yourself.* Surely they must

must glow with the greatest gratitude to God when we are thus taught that the love of our fellow creature is a duty only not equal in obligation to that of loving God himself, and only not in rank the *first commandment*.

The first great commandment we have lately considered; the second, which is *like* it, may now profitably engage our contemplation. And it seems to me most probable, should it be allowed by you that the chief miseries in life are inflicted by man upon man through the prevalence of selfishness, that ye will not wonder when the divine wisdom and goodness suggest the cure by the practice of benevolence.

The small portion of the divine word, the little glimpse of this Holy of Holies which I have presented to your view, will sufficiently shew you the *sacred* foundation upon which benevolence stands; but to give the doctrine which is now the object of our attention its finishing enforcement, I shall endeavour to shew you that it equally stands upon the authority of human reason. For do we not easily learn from experience, or our own observation, that benevolence improves every condition

condition, and perfects every other good quality of man?

Riches, health, and pleasure, wisdom, power, and honour, are usually esteemed the most desirable possessions of man. But that the branch of virtue called benevolence is essentially necessary for the perfection and enjoyment of these blessings, will, I trust, be made evident by the following remarks.

Wealth in the possession of a selfish man, is either absolutely unenjoyed, or enjoyed imperfectly, because in a very brute-like manner. In either case it is accompanied, more or less, with anxieties unknown to the generous heart. Benevolence in its best form bespeaks piety to God and love to man, in union with cheerfulness and fortitude. Though the rich man when selfish, may *fancy* himself to possess some good in his riches, yet he is really so involved in moral darkness, and so intoxicated with his visionary conceit, with his one ruling vicious impulse, that he sees not with the bystander those evils of his condition which he cannot but feel, and becomes miserable in the proportion that he becomes selfish. This or that man may want money—but the wealthy miser

miser wants every thing—starving amidst ill-envied abundance, and dying for thirst in the laden vineyard. *Covetuousness*, saith our Saviour, *is idolatry*—but the idol is another Moloch, whose phrensed votaries wound themselves with knives and lancets, and sacrifice their children in the fire. Avarice petrifies the heart, and is the most pregnant source of domestic misery.

But may not a selfish man enjoy the blessing of *health*? He cannot enjoy it like a *man*, a creature equally compounded of soul and body: if by being selfish he defrauds the former, he gratifies the grosser appetites at the expence of afflicting himself in the nobler parts of his nature. Unrestrained by benevolence, he will not, it is probable, long enjoy his pleasures, and though he wallows in the sty of corporeal delights, he is all the while teased, and bit, and stung by a thousand mean and mischievous passions which only a selfish soul can nourish into existence. He is strong indeed, but it is to pull down all the majesty of man in ruins about him; God indeed hath given him the blessing of health, but he abuses it to the destruction of that divine image in which he was made.

And

And what is *pleasure* without benevolence? That it exists without benevolence thousands and tens of thousands would tell you if they could—but these are the brute beasts which have not the faculty of speech. A *man* surely would be loath to confess, whatever he might imagine, that though he was always selfish, he was often happy. At least, such an acknowledgment bespeaks him unacquainted with the genuine taste and flavour of that superior happiness which has been planted in the generous soil of reason and religion, and been ripened by the genial warmth of benevolence. Be it observed too, that selfishness produces and fosters all those evil passions and emotions which are peculiarly painful, while such as are peculiarly pleasant are the productions of benevolence alone. No wonder therefore that the *end of the commandment*, or religion—is *charity out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned*.

Faith unfeigned is the principal root of benevolence, nourishing the soul with a requisite measure of holy knowledge, hope, and confidence: thus strengthened, it branches out on all sides of duty into so many good actions, that

that it is soon enabled to review its conduct with satisfaction, and to rejoice in the testimony of a *good conscience*. All is then right within, hence its joy in the Lord, and that cheering peace which is the twin sister of benevolence. The result is great *purity* and innocence of mind, a sort of infantine artlessness and simplicity, an honest directness of purpose that needs no concealment, and is a stranger to every embarrassment. This it should seem, is a true description of benevolence; but is it not also a true description of a happy and pleasurable state of mind?

And what is *wisdom* without benevolence? Wisdom is not a sound understanding only, but a sound understanding *benevolently* applied: misapplied, it commences cunning, which is reason perverted, or wisdom dethroned from that eminence of virtue which secures its character, utility, and rank. Wisdom indeed is that precious talent, lent by the Lord of the universe to be placed out for the production of the greatest interest; in other words, the greatest public good. But this clearly is not likely to be produced under the *management* of selfishness; it is then a buried talent,

talent. Therefore a man who conceals it from the fear of envy, or opposition to his secular interest, or in a mean accommodation to the powerful, or the temper of the times (which wisdom, as the destined guardian of *eternal* truth and propriety, is intended to rectify), or from his own indolent humour, timidity, or excessive love of quiet, or exhibits it solely with a view of profiting or displaying himself, is a miser of the very worst description, and is as an angel of light converted, and by his own choice, into a slave that drudges in a dark mine—but I ask pardon of such a slave, for he is often converted into something worse—into a wretch that secretly works under the earth, to lay those mines whose explosion desolates the fairest fabrics of human felicity, and spreads a devastation that extends through ages. It is benevolence alone that elevates wisdom like another sun, so far above the earth as to escape its noxious atmosphere, and yet preserves it near enough to beautify, and to bless it with its salutary beams.

And what is *power* without benevolence? An odious and destructive monster. Intolerance, persecution, and tyranny, all the madness and horrors

horrors of anarchy, famine and desolation, miseries of all names, and murders of every form follow fast upon the steps of power when divorced from benevolence: for instance, benevolence is not yet strong enough to still the clamours of inhuman selfishness and the cold regards of a narrow policy, which still would urge us *freemen* to continue, and when *we* continue, to countenance the slavery of man, and us *christians*—the most lamentable calamities that sordid avarice and unmanly cruelty have ever inflicted upon the most resistleless, the most pitiable weakness. O let us dare to do right, and trust God a little with our national interests; let us not lean upon a broken reed, when we may have the rock of empires for our support.

And what is *honour* or *reputation* without benevolence? imagine a case. For instance, suppose a man well born, and handsome, strong, and witty; add prudence, temperance, and chastity; conceive him just, that he may escape the punishments of men; and pious only, from the fear of God; give him courage, if you please, with learning, and eloquence, and every other good quality but benevolence; and

and can ye really so conceive of him as to honour him, and can ye really report of him at once as a very selfish honourable man? No, it would sound like a contradiction in terms, it would operate upon your feelings, with the force of the utmost affront upon your common sense.

Thus ye see benevolence giving the sterling value to the first blessings; and vast is its benefit in the two great conditions of adversity and prosperity. They evidently demand its assistance—the former most evidently; for as the benevolent man when in adversity is most likely to meet with relief from without, so from within he derives the greatest, by the recollection of his own good actions; his adversity therefore will not be either excessive or of long continuance. But the prosperity of the selfish is not likely to continue long, and whilst it continues there cannot be much warmth of pleasure or lustre of reputation in it; it is a heated brand smothering beneath a heap of ashes, every body is interested to increase the heap, and has an inclination to trample upon it; for the selfish man is hated, God help him, even by his own household, and also by them
that

that are most like him, since men naturally love the lovelier qualities, seldom know themselves, and if selfish, are annoyed in their movements by such as are selfish. A selfish prosperity, shewy as it may seem for a time, is but as a stately tree overloaded with leaves and barren of fruit, penetrated through every part by the devouring canker of selfishness, and anon to be levelled with the ground by the lightnings of heaven.

But without benevolence, all the other virtues themselves lose half their excellency.

Let prudence indeed conduct them and marshal their several movements, but if prudence herself is not counselled by benevolence, every other virtue, of course, becomes the agent of selfishness—and prudence then, whatever may be her plausible appearance and popular reception, is to genuine prudence but as the borrowed light of the moon to that of the sun:—cold is her radiance, and her light languid and uncertain.

An Apostle hath said, *though I have faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing; though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, it profiteth me nothing.*

VOL. I.

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For

For what is faith without charity? A fruitless opinion. What almsgiving? Ostentation. What martyrdom itself? The proud obstinacy of a stony-hearted bigot.

Love, which steps out from ourselves towards God or man, or some other animal capable of being benefited by us, casts a gracious lustre upon the very things and conditions that belong to us; the consequence is good humour, and contentment with God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves.

But I would as soon attempt to describe the several glories of the sun, when in our variegated land and sky, and after some cold, dismal, and stormy night, he ariseth (with the *strength of a giant to run his course*, and with the benevolence of a descending angel to scatter blessings) and unfoldeth himself in his brightest lustre, as to describe all the beautiful effects of benevolence (who has hitherto but just purpled the summits of our horizon), when she shall break forth upon us in all her effulgence, and shed all her benign splendors upon every other virtue.

One may conceive then, the kingdom of Christ being thus perfectly come, and when
every

every man shall love his neighbour as himself, and at the same time love God *with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind*, that not only at this new moral creation all the host of heaven shall shout for joy, but that the Father of men and angels, who himself is love, shall himself consummate their joy by a smile of applause upon a sympathy so angelically lovely, and an exultation so divinely benevolent.

This is that christian charity which is the *end of the commandment*, of religion itself.

“ Therefore, O Lord our God, who has
“ taught us that all our doings without charity,
“ are nothing worth, send thy Holy Ghost, and
“ pour into our hearts the most excellent gift of
“ charity, which is so much the very bond of
“ peace and all the virtues, that without it who-
“ soever liveth is dead before thee.

“ Quicken then in our hearts this virtue of
“ all the virtues, and so advance the kingdom
“ of Christ upon the earth, that each man may
“ love his neighbour as himself, that we may
“ duly honour all men, judge not, love as
“ brethren, and exult at length in that perfect
“ unity of heart and spirit, which alone can
“ maintain the dignity, secure the peace, bless

“ the society, mature the understanding, and
“ felicitate the heart of man.”

For *every valley* of sorrow shall be then exalted into the sunshine of effective consolation, and *every mountain* of pride shall then be sunk low into the abyss of eternal night, and the *crooked* mind of selfishness shall be *made straight*, and the *rough places* of cruelty be *made smooth*; and the glory of charity shall be revealed, and it shall come shining forth from the wilderness of Time in all its brightest radiance, and *all flesh* shall see it together, and shall cry aloud with heart and voice, great and glorious, O God our Saviour, are thy three attending angels, *Faith, Hope, and Charity*, but the greatest and most glorious of these is CHARITY,

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X.

I P E T E R ii. 17.

*Honour all men: love the brotherhood: fear
God: honour the king.—*

TH E S E apostolical precepts, addressed to men as members of society, suggest the best art of improving it, and life itself, for their most valuable ends. By *honouring all men*, we render our own tempers, and the tempers of those with whom we are connected, more social and benign; we, as little as possible, receive, or give offence; we lessen the cares of life by diminishing the spirit of contest and invidious rivalry; we contribute to the better spirit of peace, advance the influence of candour and justice, induce a cour-

teous air into the commerce between man and man, improve it into an amicable interchange of good, and, as far as in us lies, convert this life, usually a scene of selfish aims and ungenerous controversies, into the fair field of honour, and liberal intercourse. And thereby this life, *now* too much, as it were, a fraudulent and anxious house of trade, is changed by us into a palace of ingenuous hospitality; or too much *now* resembling a wintry season, is revived by us into the summer scene of verdure, fruits, and flowers; and in the place of barrenness and cold, of a rainy, dark, and tempestuous season, we rejoice in a serene air, and a diffusive light: the moral paradise is restored, nor has the *sun of righteousness* arisen in vain *with healing in his wings*. But by *loving the brotherhood* (a sentiment which cannot *narrow* the heart whilst we *honour all men*), we proportion our kind affections to the nearness of their objects, bring home to our peculiar circle all those helps of love and joy which it naturally requires from us, and rejoicing in this essential constituent of human happiness, and warmed with the habitual gratification of all the courteous

teous and benign affections, we advance with the more alacrity into the more distant courses of human exertion and duty. It is true, that some minds may rest in the former, but such minds, though amiable, are usually indolent, and of small comprehension: but in general it may be said, that a brighter, and more extensive radiance of activity proceeds from this warm and glowing spirit of contentment and benevolence, than what issues from that which is chilled by the cold, and darkened by the gloom of domestic apathy, discontent, and discord. Few public services are to be expected from that man who does not *love his brotherhood*: but in all these duties he will be the more confirmed, if he *fears God*. A principle this, that will summon reason to its work, sharpen its sight, enlarge its view, quicken its caution, and animate it to manage the passions (either by reining or exciting them), and to direct them into their proper course; it will introduce the whole influence of religion into the mind of man, all its train of terrors, hopes, and joys, and teach him to use time for the purposes of eternity. But by *honouring the king*, he observes the laws of

N 4

his

his country, does what he can to secure its peace, and is prepared by a *quiet* passage through this short scene for that angelical converse to which it should be prelude:* he has not wasted his little day of trial in contests which are often frivolous, and not seldom pernicious to himself and fellow-creatures; he has left himself leisure to become a good man.

* Dr. Scott in that noble work upon the christian life (so recommended by Mr. Addison), has with great strength of reasoning, and beauty of imagination, illustrated this important truth; upon which we cannot dwell too much, in order to form a just idea of the prevailing manners, to ascertain or regulate our own tempers, and to answer the end of our existence. Bishop Burnet in his *Pastoral Charge*, has some valuable and well known passages to this purpose. Archbishop Tillotson, and some of his illustrious cotemporaries, are well known to have done much in this line, and at once gave God the homage of their reason, imagination, and passions. They seemed to be thoroughly sensible, that the *heavenly conversation* was best promoted by the most exquisite delineations of it, *quæ, si oculis cerneretur, mirabiles amores (ut ait, Plato), excitaret sapientiæ*. They submitted, occasionally, to the line of controversy, but they sought that of a generous exposition of the works, and law of God, and in this therefore they rejoiced, exulted, and triumphed with the display of all their powers. But is not this also the distinguishing glory of their pupil Addison? and let me add of Dr. Blair, who though last, is not the least of that renowned and benevolent brotherhood.

Such

Such is the plan which christianity proposes for our right conduct in society; and it seems so much the best possible plan, that we should be *unwise*, as well as *impious*, not to embrace it. Nor herein are we only taught by the Apostle *as well*, but as *much* as we can be in the same compass of words, the divine authority of which is enhanced by their apostolical simplicity. Herein an attention is paid to our nature as men, and our situation as members of society; to our concerns here and hereafter; and to the degrees of affection which we justly owe, and can naturally pay to our fellow-creatures at large, or to them who bear the nearer relation to us.

This is a more *particular* view of human duty, than those upon which we have been meditating; but next to them is perhaps one of the most *general* delineations of it which is afforded us by holy scripture; and therefore the consideration of it may properly follow the preceding discourses, and lead to those minuter views of our conduct, which are disclosed in the *glorious* sermon upon the mount.

Variations of expression for the sake of *grace*, at the expence of an important sense,
are

are not to be expected in a manly writer, and much less in an *inspired* one: but advantage is not to be taken of the venerable simplicity which distinguishes and *adorns* the sacred text, to examine the meaning of every word by the rules of the scholastic orator and philosopher. I should therefore be sorry to *refine* (*ludere cum sacris*), when I infer, from the application of the same term *honour* to *the king*, and to *all men*, that the human mind seems directed by the Apostle to preserve itself in a due equipoise between the temper of servitude and licentiousness.

That centre of national union, and that source of national activity, the King, the one *supreme* magistrate, is left to pursue his *lawful* course, untroubled, unclogged, and undeprived of the respect which sustains his requisite authority; whilst the command to honour *all men*, admits a propriety in checking his career when it commences *lawless*. Christianity, which is *divine reason*, penetrates the farthest into the nature of man, and at once contrives its precepts for the production of his best conduct, and the control of his worst tendencies; it would support his dignity, and
therefore

therefore his rights; but it would not humour either his pride or envy, for it would lead him to *sobriety* of thought, *wisdom* of action, and *benignity* of affection. *Charity* is the peculiar end of this commandment, and it peculiarly reprobates the proud and angry passions.

So august is the one individual who bears a paternal relation to a *whole people*, who stands invested with all the dignity and authority of the national laws which he executes, who therefore brings into act the best issues, and wisest decrees of the public mind (most of them, it is probable, our richest inheritance from a long course of ages, and therefore the work of *accumulated* wisdom and experience), that we cannot but instantly see that *honour* belongs unto *him*. But august also is the idea of *all men*, of human kind thus *collectively* considered, of this *ocean* of men; for there is something very august in the idea of all *our fellow* subjects: yet these, like the several streams which compose a great river, *separately* considered, convey no sublime idea; but considered *collectively*, and so collectively as we (as a nation), are privileged to consider them,
they

they impress us with one of the sublimest conceptions, that—of the mightiest river which *assails* the ocean itself, and far *obtrudes*, its colour, and its motion into the great mass of waters.* In whatsoever sense we limit the precept, there is the utmost reason to *honour all men*.

Though the supreme magistrate is the individual in whom power and majesty are the most *concentred*, and who attracts immediately to himself no small homage of our imagination, passions, and reason too (if as among *us* the regal grandeur is founded in the public will and law, for *otherwise* founded it can be entitled to no *homage*, whatever *terror* it may excite)†. Yet we still remember the rays
creative

* Benevolence points to our *country* as to her only adequate mark; whatever falls short of that glorious end is too small for her full gratifications, and all beyond is too immense for her grasp.

Melmoth in letters of Fitzosborn. Lett. 30.

† In such a constitution the power of the prince is not absolute, but sufficient for every right purpose, and which a great and good mind will delight in executing. The obedience of the people, is the obedience of *men*, not *slaves*—unforced and unfeigned; and therefore the more honourable and more acceptable

creative of this majestic energy, and duly reverence the effect and cause: we *honour the king*, and we *honour all men*. We are always obliged to *honour* the king, and a very eminent goodness may induce us to *love* him: but honour and love are different sentiments; and one may say that a king is *personally* complimented when he is *loved*, and *officially* injured when he is not *honoured*. But it is the relation suggested to us in the familiar idea of brotherhood, which appears the more *general* object of *love*; and therefore we hear with a ready assent the Apostle when he bids us to love the *brotherhood*: but we require not any one, not even an *Apostle*, to tell us whom we should most *fear*, for nature herself cries out from within us, and her word is GOD.

In short, these are so many several truths which carry along with them so clearly their
own

ceptable to an upright king: and the temper, the affection, the vigour, which liberty inspires, will carry the dignity and greatness of a sovereign to a higher pitch, than can be attained by any other principle of government.

Extract from the Coronation Sermon, preached by Robert, Lord Bishop of Salisbury, and published by His Majesty's special command.

own evidence, that we readily receive them as the principles of our conduct; and yet such in fact has been, and is, the behaviour of men respecting them, that we may still very profitably give them our consideration, in order to quicken obedience, and render practice more conformable to precept.

And now let us consider the duty of *honouring all men*. Man is a noble creature, crowned by God with very superior endowments; for even in his bodily form and capacities he is the first of all terrestrial animals, as he is the only one enriched with a mind capable, by being rational, of becoming virtuous: no wonder therefore, that after a *short* trial here, he commences a life of immortality, and is (as we are *divinely* taught) befriended by angels themselves. And these generous beings may well desire to assist him in his advancement into their heavenly conversation and society, for they are qualified to trace the vestiges of his original greatness amidst all his present miseries, all these ruins, as it were, of a glorious palace:* they must

* An image borrowed from *Pascal's Thoughts*.

now behold him with a reverential pity, remembering how the Lord of Glory himself once assumed the form of man for the restoration of his greatness; nor can they but imitate by tender pity *their* example as well as ours, *the meek and lowly Jesus*, whom they still see mediating for man at the right hand of his *benign* Father. I pass by their recollection of the *beginning* when God created the earth, and having prepared it with the most costly furniture, and all the inferior animals, said (the God of God's said), "*let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have DOMINION over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth:*" and they could not but discern how capable he was of this dominion by the amplest powers of a mind contemplative, penetrative, inventive, and creative.* When the wisdom, *which plays before*

* "*Solus homo, qui scire sagax, cui summa cupido,
Scrutari causas, et mutua fœdera rerum.*"

I quote with satisfaction and respectful gratitude these lines from the noble poem of I. H. Browne, Esq. upon the immortality of the soul;—for with my fellow citizen of Lichfield,

Dr.

before the eternal, called this lustre into view, it is said, *the angels shouted for joy*; can we then wonder, that when sin had overclouded it, and the re-illumination was promised by the *birth* of the Messiah, that the same benevolent beings sang hosanna to the highest; or, when they beheld the Redeemer on the cross, that they, with the elements themselves, were troubled, and that they then saw reason to *honour the redeemed thus honoured*; more especially when they were *divinely instructed* to foresee the august array of the universal judgment, the accompanying dissolution of these material elements, the destruction of Death and Time, their own glorifying attendance upon the Judge of the quick and the dead, and the terrestrial existence of man, closing with a majesty more than adequate to his sublime outset.

Dr. Johnson, I can say of this gentlemen what the Dr. said of Mr. Walmsley, “*I honoured him, and he endured me*,” for as he resembled Mr. Addison in many respects, so I am convinced, that had Mr. Mason known this gentleman as well as I did, he would have extended the æra of *candid criticism* to that day which deprived the world of this truly elegant, moral, and classical writer.

See *Mr. Mason's life of Mr. Whitehead.*

Pondering

Pondering then upon these things, ye will readily acknowledge the visionary nothingness of all temporal greatness, and the substantial guilt of all earthly pride, and will reverently regard the Apostle when he says, *honour all men.*

Honour *usually* imports some homage of esteem and respect paid to some excellent quality, or to that rank, station, or age, which in general imply some moral or intellectual excellency. But then, it seems, we cannot honour every man, unless we actually discover some excellency in every man; but we must discover what in every man claims that homage of respect imported by the term honour: for be his condition poverty, and his state of mind ignorance, *sin* itself, whatever is in itself odious or contemptible, he still possesses that dignity which belongs to man as man, and as such, challenges some degree of that regard which is termed honour; and by possessing it, stands a chance of acquiring more; for then we do not totally dishonour him, reject him from our notice, and preclude him from the chance of being *relieved, instructed, and reformed* by us: *nil desperandum Christo duce*; the christian still

will *honour* his brother, hope for him, and assist him, agreeably to the precepts and pattern of the *Universal* Redeemer. Let this sentiment, this leaning of respect towards our brethren in nature and grace, never desert us ; for it is the foundation of every noble exertion, and naturally insinuates into us all those equitable, mannerly, and kind attentions which adorn human society, constitute it *social*, and burnish that precious gold ; it also exalts us against the debasements of sin, and in the same proportion humiliates us into penitence, when we have baulked our aspirations, damped our hopes, and insulted our nature by sinning ; it has also a tendency to lessen those mean suspicions, those sullen and contemptuous humours which harden man against man, whilst it lights up and expands the human countenance, and melts the human heart into a capacity of receiving every charitable impression : therefore, I say, that no circumstances of any individual will excite us to despise him, not even *sin*, be it ever so glaring ; for whilst mercy will induce us to brush this viper from his breast, she will spread her veil over its deforming taint, with her lenient oil
affuage

affuage its virulence, nor often labour in vain to effect a perfect cure. In short—we *judge* him not, but endeavour to avert from him the worst, the *irreversible* sentence: we act *angelically*, that we may rejoice with the *angels* over the sinner that repenteth. But should we thus act if we did not *honour all men*? Should we readily love and oblige those whom we despise? no; and whatever might be their merit or distress, the one would be unrewarded by us, and the other unrelieved. Ye reject the *despised* weed, and leave it a prey to all its assailants; but ye remove the caterpillar from the flower which ye *admire*, ye would revivify its colours, and recal its fragrance, and *honouring* it, would protect it from the rending blast, the burning heat, or the blighting cold; bringing it forwards only into the sunshine which *duly* warms it, and into the shower by which it is kindly fostered. Whatever *irreversible* evils arise to the *deserving* man (whose prosperity is the cause of mankind, is a public blessing) from base suspicions, from superficial attentions, from criminal indolence, from fastidious negligence, and oppressive insolence; whatever heart-rending

miseries are his portion from the flagitious perfidy, and ingratitude of those whom he owned for his friends, these can never arise from him who *honours all men*. He that pities *sin*, can never wound *desert*. The good man, conversant in human life, when he recollects what is *practised*, and what is *suffered*, will lay his hand upon his heart, and say, let me *honour all men*.

We cannot indeed shew by words that degree of consideration or honour to which every man is entitled ; yet we know when we do not pay it, and must perceive that we offend by thus *setting at nought a brother*. We know too, that the like misbehaviour towards our own persons is offensive to ourselves, and that it is but just, that whatsoever we would *that men should do unto us, we should do even so unto them*. Discharge but a *spark* of contempt upon the proud man, and it is to him as a burning *brand* of offence ; mighty mischiefs hence arise : and ye will withhold this barbarity from the good man, because indifferent to the riches and honours of this world, he rejoices most in your esteem.

Out

Out of the heart proceed the issues of life; it is the *inward* man which is addressed by christian precept, and even by a generous philosophy.* Therefore do not vainly hope to hide a contemptuous mind under the flimsy

* Imprudence (witness the customary language of this commercial age) is *chiefly* thought to consist in that conduct which takes little account of riches, nor displays any skill or effort in cultivating the means of it. The means of it *now* are sometimes those very stations in which a *lucrative* habit of mind is as improper as the luxurious or fordid ends for which money is sought. But prudence (which is but another word for the *best* practical wisdom) towers above the humours and fashions of the day, and is that overseeing, or far-seeing and comprehensive operation of intellect, that paramount judicial faculty which assorts and regulates pursuits by that end which it judges best, and more or less permits them as she considers them essential to her end, the *chief good* of man. Mr. Harris's treatise upon happiness, seems to be the best exposition extant of that *generous* philosophy which places our *chief good* in moral rectitude of conduct; and the more this persuasion passes from our understanding into our habits, the more we shall discern the perfect accord between the best deductions of reason, and the divine decrees. I cannot but gratify myself by observing that *all* the works of Mr. Harris (exclusively of their learning, and ability to improve the *taste*, and strengthen the *reasoning* powers) are of precious value for the serene and amiable temper which sheds its cheering light over them. His last work is to me one of the most pleasing books in our language;—thus this humane and accomplished writer wound up his literary labours, *placidâque ibi demum in pace quievit.*

veil of hypocrisy; for real respect wins more affection than any lucrative gift: men for their convenience may *trade* with you, but they do not therefore *love* you. Real respect is *the* gift from man to man, and the nobler ye are in wisdom and virtue, the more apt ye will be to *pay* it, nor will it be so much *payed* by you, as it will *flow* from you as naturally as the rays from the sun. But if exalted in a high sphere, you absorb more good than you distribute, you may *fancy* yourself to be a sun, but wisdom *knows* you to be but as the *sponge*, whose parent is the *rock*.

But it may be asked, is not the sentiment of contempt *sometimes* natural, and the expression of it *occasionally* proper? Contempt in truth is felt, and practised among all orders of men (even among those who ought to be *polished* out of it as the most debasing barbarism), it is therefore probably *natural*, but is it therefore *proper*? It behoves the christian preacher not to *overcloud* the summit of truth, because it may escape the ken of the *common* eye; but to bare it in all its brightness, and awaken men to strain up towards its glories, and by the effort strengthen themselves, and
advance

advance as high as they possibly can. He will not expect that the *saving* virtue can otherwise be acquired, nor can he have so mean an opinion of *eternal* felicity purchased by the Son of God, as to think that such a salvation doth not merit the utmost efforts of man. But then, he well knows, that so much *actual* virtue cannot be expected from some men as others, for I cannot but think with a certain enemy to christianity (too well known for his metaphysical attempts to degrade the dignity of man, and obscure the old avenues to *all* truth), that the greatest *actual* virtue results from an union of the best heart and understanding. Hence the progress in virtue is in a great measure owing to reason, and is the best form of art working upon the best form of nature; therefore (borrowing the apostolical imagery of *edification*), I would thus attempt to explain the moral process.

There is a noble ruggedness in the *base* of virtue, in that part of it which is nearest to the *earth*, and most like it; but as it riseth towards the heavens, it proportionally departs from the sterner qualities and severer simplicities of the inferior part; from the asperities

of an honest anger, a generous disdain, and moral haughtiness, from the careless lineaments of an undistinguishing good-nature, an infantine artlessness, and a piety merely sentimental; yet still standing upon their strength it exhibits only that beauty which derives its grace from *habitual* virtue, and its symmetry, breadth, and altitude, from experience and wisdom: therefore in the crowning part of the fabric ye cannot discern one line of contempt; and brightened with all the finishing lustre of christian charity, glittering, in short, with all the perfective, and numerous glories of this *wisdom from above*, it has arisen so high towards the heavens, as to become far and wide a spectacle of wonder, delight, and hospitable invitation to all those who are drooping in this vale of misery with penitential sorrow, who *travel*, and are *heavy laden* with that *mourning* which deserves to be *comforted*. But to depart (however unwillingly) from these pleasing images, and to recur to my immediate point, let me request you to pause a moment, to look inwards into yourself, and examine what the sensation of contempt is. Consider then its effects upon the mind, the countenance,

countenance, the voice, and the actions of man, trace it to its roots, untwist them, and scrutinize every fibre, and then looking to the usual objects and causes of contempt, determine whether a sentiment, and a conduct more amiable, more simple, and more noble than what contempt suggests, may not towards such objects, and from such causes, be *universally* substituted for the comfort and embellishment of human converse: I pray you, take this course of examination, and become wise by your own conclusions and efforts; for the heart of him who thus becomes wise, is as an adamant deeply engraven with the best and resistless admonitions.

How valuable then is that man who always hesitates with a lowly respectfulness, and modest caution—not to give offence! how sagacious to discern, and kind to prevent the most fruitful cause of contention! The hypocritical imitation of such a conduct is thought an essential part of worldly prudence, and is usually practised by those who descend to play a *theatrical* part in life, and are crafty to *steal* the stipend which is due to *real* desert. This, *in part*, they may gain, by gaining the
praise

praise of men, and its temporary fruits; but with it they are encumbered also with the *woe* that is pronounced upon them, of *whom all men speak well*.* Part of this woe constantly attends them; I mean, a degrading sense of their fordid selfishness, a temper that breaks out easily into all the small, yet pestilential movements of envy, and a consciousness of wanting that easy play of spirits, and ingenuous simplicity which are the fruits of manly virtue; day after day they weave a web of entangling anxieties which embarrass every step of their conduct, which cramp their laughter into the smile of falshood, and debase the flight of their intellect, into the dulness of trite and trivial converse (at the best), but not seldom into the disingenuous practice of the grossest adulation, in which falshood is punished by acting as stupidity:†
and

* See the truly-elegant and profound discourse of the present Bishop of Worcester, upon this important subject.

† See, upon the subject of sincerity towards God and man, the first sermon of Archbishop Tillotson, in 2d folio vol.—this (as the margin tells you) was the *last* sermon preached by his Grace—and verily *pleno subit ostia velo*. Dr. Samuel Clarke heard

and yet after all this prostitution of human dignity, and original excellency in *individual* man, their reward is nothing in the view of the christian, for it shall vanish as the morning dew; and they, in the mean time, by *deceiving*, have been but *dishonouring* all men. The truly-good man only *honours all men* as far as is consistent with the *fear of God*; but indeed he who most supports the *fear of God* in the sentiments of mankind, most *honours all men*, and approves himself the best friend to the best interests of this immortal being. Though as the christian, he cannot deviate in the least from the genuine forms of truth and simplicity, he yet, as the christian, is the more attentive to give them all the smoothness and lustre which are necessary to *adorn the child*, as well

heard it preached, and as he told Dr. Tottic, late Canon of Ch. Ch. (from whom I received the anecdote) the manner in which it was delivered was equal to the matter. It must then have been the most perfect display of good sense and piety, of pathos, simplicity, and dignity.

*Ergo hunc, ergo virum perpetuus sopor
Urget ? cui pudor, et justitiæ soror
Incorrupta fides, nudaque veritas,
Quando ullum invenient parem ?*

as the doctrine of God in all things; that his good may not be evil spoken of; that he may glorify on earth his Father which is in heaven; that he may be all things to all men, in order to save some; that he may give honour to whom honour is due; protect the innocence of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent; and demonstrate by his conduct, that religion is not the prostitution, but display of benevolence, and is the work of the best wisdom, as well as the emanation of the best sentiment. Such therefore is the nature, the privilege, the majestic grandeur, the divine power of virtue, that as the wisest men have been its votaries, so it has ever increased, as well as warmed the mass of intellect.* Such then being his cast of mind
who

* History is before us, and allows us to reason from facts. The men of power, of sciences, and arts, whose glory is now familiar with us, from the permanent effects of their exertions, are easily to be scrutinized by us, in order to ascertain the greater or less influence of religion upon their understanding, and its operations. And it may be said in general, that the religion of Christ tends to make us *beneficent*, whilst, as the bringer of immortality to light, it must elevate us, if otherwise capable, *operibus nostris totam familiam humanam dotare*.

Such

who *honours all men*, he has never practised a base connivance or flattery, nor wasted his good days in frivolous engagements or converse; but considering the prevalence of everlasting truth as the best means of dignifying *all men*, he has therefore *honoured all men* by supporting its authority beyond all things, and by sacrificing the temporary good of himself, or any other *individual*, or a few, to the welfare of all mankind, and the generations to come. He has conceived the importance of this trust, he has considered the proper aim of man, he has made his choice with a *few*; he doth not act from simplicity, but the noblest design; he fulfils this trust, and therefore most *honours all men*. He bestows the good seed *discreetly* indeed, but *abundantly*, and leaves the product

Such was the language of Bacon, in whose immortal works abundant passages may be adduced to shew the useful, and elevating influence of religion upon a comprehensive mind: The following passage is a very striking one. *Deus universi conditor, conservator, instaurator, hoc opus et in ascensione ad gloriam suam, et in descensione ad bonum humanum pro sua erga homines benevolentia, et misericordia, protegat et regat, per filium suum unicum, NOBISCUM DEUM. Auctoris monitum—* pag. 296. fol. Mallet.

to

to God. This, it may be said, is but the act of *justice*, which *looks up* to mankind *with respect*, and therefore *honours all men*; but if it were also the act of *charity*, which *looks down* to mankind with *love and pity*, so much the better—they are twin-sisters, justice and charity, mutually supporting, directing, adorning, and dignifying each other. Are you just from a *dispassionate* conception of propriety, it is well; but it is much better if you are just *also* from a *generous* principle which respects other men, from a *humane* desire to *honour them*; for then justice borrowing its *perfective* addition from charity is better in its principle, and its operation; is more animated, attentive, comprehensive, generous, and magnanimous, becoming that rare, and therefore *heroic* virtue, which has produced the names most cherished by glory; and the characters whose benefactions and luminous excellency are still reflected by the brightest renown. But what is still better, the man thus *honest*, thus the *noblest work of God*, of the divine grace, is encouraged to look up to God with the warmest hopes of his mercy; and walks among
men

men with all the *complacency*, without the pride of the benefactor. Let men be ungrateful, let men not render unto him the honour which is his due, let the *ignorant* despise the virtue which they cannot *understand*, the *envious* oppose the merit which they cannot *equal*, and the proud convert gratitude into injuries—they cannot hurt *him*—he has *put on the armour of Christ*; he has arisen above the praise, and the power of men; he is arrived at the summit of character, whence he views the angelic converse and temper—his *conversation* is already in *heaven*. He may (till thus become *this new man in Christ Jesus*) have occasionally yielded to some anger or sorrow, but the storm is now blown away, and the shower has passed: he considers the presence of God, *he has acquainted himself with God, and is at peace*, he *imagines* the wreath of victory suspended over his head by the *angel of the new covenant*; he now understands the littleness of all human things, the shortness of this, and the duration of the coming life, and therefore he will continue
generous

generous to the last, pity misconstructions, forgive ingratitude, return good for evil, shew that he knows how to *honour all men*, and find that *the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X I.

I P E T E R ii. 17.

*Honour all men: love the brotherhood: fear
God: honour the king.*

THE preceding discourse was intended to prove, that man as man, ought always to be honoured; and therefore, that his *person* should never be despised, whatever may be his *conduct*.* But if this is at once the conclusion of reason, and the decree of religion, we must lament with astonishment, to behold the prevalence of contempt in this

* When Aristotle was upbraided for shewing mercy to a bad man, "I pitied," said he, "not the *manners*, but the *man*,"

country, where reason is not ill cultivated (I speak not of its application), nor religion ill understood, whatever may be its influence. Is it, that contempt is less controllable by the laws of the state, than any other form of injury, and that this locust-plague remains to annoy us, when the divine providence has delivered us from the rest? We cannot wonder that contempt (not reason) assails christianity, which invites the one to *prove all things*, but virtually reprobates the other, by bidding us *honour all men*. Yet though contempt is fostered upon the lap of infidelity, has she yet relinquished the controversies of christians? *In some minds, whatsoever ye pour into them turns acid*. But we cannot be surprised that an indolent, fastidious, and proud age, renders men contemptuous, and degrades them into this low, *ungentle*, and selfish sentiment; and that contemptuous descriptions of human nature are the products of modish philosophy, and the convenient and *encouraging* accommodations to modish manners: man and his rule must be kept down, lest too much should be expected from him. And surely never were apter instruments forged to
undermine

undermine the fabric of primeval wisdom, and shake all old order into confusion, than what have been wrought by this philosophy (*falsely so called*), this *furtive* solicitor of speculative vanity, insidious envy, and rapacious sensuality. Oh! that there should ever be found men (especially in this age which is so enlightened, and so replenished with *increasing* instances of the divine goodness and human wisdom, and in this thinking and modest, this grave, manly, and decorous nation) who can employ the grave and sober mood of *wisdom* to prove man a *fool*, to *prove* that there is no *proof*, and to descant, in the serenest strains,* and with a marvellous tone of insensibility, on the miseries and the worthlessness of their *fellow creatures*.

* *Lene quoddam genus orationis.*

Cic.

It is a viper in a chrystalline case. Cicero's own pure and tranquil diction exhibited no serpent-like horrors, nothing monstrous and abhorrent from respectable opinions, nothing libellous on man, or impious respecting God; but from his copious and gentle, yet exalted intellect, it descended graciously, as a rich *stream* to *fertilize*, and not as a *cataraet* to *destroy*, and bore along with it, what it beautifully displayed, that golden ore of truth, which *anon* was to receive the *divine* improvement and sanction, for its *universal* currency and acceptance.

Man (once the *hero* of old philosophy, and once *divinely* described as made *in the image of*, and redeemed by the Son of, God) is now, it seems, not what Socrates thought him, when the injured patriot took his farewel of his judges, and left them with the triumphant hopes of immortal happiness; or what a greater than Socrates thought his penitent fellow-sufferer, when he said, *this day shalt thou be with me in paradise*: for man is now *contemptuously* represented as incapable of escaping his *material* shell, as one and the same with it, as a walking clock, or a driven barrow, as a machine, as nothing. And thus truth has been persecuted—christian truth—by its false and weak friends, and when it has been at length proved the closest ally of reason, reason must be pulled down to the ground, that they *may* both fall at once. But whom God has joined together, man shall not rend asunder: *the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.*

Wide in sad truth is the influence of contempt. School is at contemptuous war with school—the sciences with the arts—the men of judgment with the *children* of imagination

tion—the reader with the writer—learning with eloquence—and common sense with both—while wits in the same line, regarding selfish ends or humours, which are *many*, and not the public good, which is *one*, would degrade each other.* And most men *now*, being contemptuous respecting all men, and as if we were now in danger of aristotelic proscription and papal fulmination, are eager to dogmatize upon their own stock of ideas and self-born systems, not aware that with this stock only they are but intellectual dwarfs, and are punished with the mortifications of such, because they will not stand upon the mountain-mass of accumulated wisdom, and the experience of ages; and from this vantage ground† take the glorious prospect which their benevolent Creator has gradually through the preceding ages contrived to spread out for the rich inheritance of the succeeding. He that would traverse the sea of knowledge judiciously, will not solely depend upon the

* *E. g.* see Dr. Johnson's life of Gray, and Lyttelton.

† An expression somewhere of Bacon's, and (if I mistake not) used for the same purpose as above.

lights of his own vessel, but will take advantage of the stars in the firmament of God, and of the many flaming beacons which the benevolence of his fellow creatures has stationed for his use. But Contempt, not satisfied with these superior victories, leading Calumny by the hand, blackens the bowers of pleasurable grace by the presence of this fury, or forces her to shake her poisonous hair over the circles of convivial merriment, or domestic tenderness.

Enough has been said upon this point—it is truly painful to delineate these antichristian horrors: so much for the *general* view of my subject, and its importance. And now it may be useful to specify (as far as our compass of time admits) certain circumstances which claim, more or less, for *some* men a larger degree of honour than what is due to *all*. Be it then *first* observed, that there are no offices, stations, and characters, which are not *impaired* by the want of *wisdom*, and *blasted* by the want of *virtue*; and that these are in fact the only circumstances of man which are *internally* honoured: hence acknowledge the good man to be the first object of honour,
and

and then the wise man. But I am apt to think, that in bestowing estimation, honour, or trust, we over-rate wisdom; more especially, that we do not enough enquire for the virtue which is to apply any entrusted powers. Knowledge, and great intellectual parts and faculties, are distinct from their application, which depends not only upon a good disposition, but good habits, the result, and the best result of education; but I am fearful that this circumstance is not sufficiently regarded, either in the *training*, or the *stationing* of men; yet is there an *imaginable* circumstance that merits so much regard? Therefore for the public good and our own, it behoves us to honour virtue above all things: for our own, I say, for can we otherwise act better for the improvement, or discovery of our own character; and what is our character, if this is not its first gratification; and how can we better prepare ourselves for the society of the god-like in heaven, than by this god-like movement on earth? and of whom should we sooner than from the good expect gratitude, and all possible returns of kindness? He that serves the selfish is but their *dupe*; and he that lavishes upon the

contemptuous flatterer (for to flatter is to contemn) what would gratify the *modest* wishes of *many* good men, but attempts to satisfy an insatiable rapacity—and is in truth but the slave of him, whose importunity he cannot bury in the grave of gratitude. And if virtue is the first object of our beneficence, what do we? we look around, above, and below us, to discover her votaries, and whether they inhabit the palace of gold, or the cottage of clay—neither envy or pride prevent us from tendering them our best services, for the relief of regal anxiety, or lowly indigence.

We are to *honour all men*, and therefore all orders of men: the higher, for they *variously* want our assistance; they want our peaceable demeanour, our candid constructions, our honourable confidence, our help against the selfishness of faction, the encouragement of our grateful applauses, and the strengthening of our prayers to him who *ruleth in the kingdoms of the earth*, and which cannot be preferred from hearts indisposed to give them every other fit and requisite aid.

But as *all men* are to be honoured, should the higher orders not honour the lower, these
would

would be irritated into disorderly movements. It is expected, it is demanded, that the most fortunate, the most powerful, the most trusted, the most cultivated part of mankind, should be the foremost also in the lines of a *generous* virtue: all then will be well, for then a contest of generosity will commence between all orders of men, and the conduct of the protectors and protected will harmonize a nation into one happy family. It is the spirit of a generous intercourse of good which perfects society, and characterizes man, whatever man's atheistical libellers may say, those monstrous *leviathans* who* *tempest the ocean* of truth: this is the true public spirit, and we cannot doubt where it ought to originate, and who are the proper springs of it. But if these are diverted from their due course, or waste themselves by vicious indolence, or congregate in the *loftier* region, combine into one vast *stagnant* pool, and taint the surrounding air with a taint that will not rest there, we must expect that the *distant lowlands* which they should vivify, refresh, and enrich, will degenerate into un-

* Milton.

wholefome wilds, and harbour abundantly the most noxious and envenomed reptiles.*

In all the orders, in every *honest* employment and profession, of men, as in every *individual*, there is to be found something praise-worthy, which should be marked by praise, for the advancement

* *Whilst this hard truth I teach, methinks I see
The monster London laugh at me;
I should at thee too, foolish city,
If it were fit to laugh at misery;
But thy estate I pity.*

Cowley. P. 95, fol. edit.

Man, rational, immortal man, seduced from indispenfible duties, from the cultivation of thought, and high attainments, moral and intellectual, by a scene of amusements, which are not supplied by his own understanding, which cannot improve, and oftner corrupt it; by follies which unnerve his intellect, by luxuries which injure his health, or by vices that make a wreck of his soul—is to be pitied indeed (as the amiable Cowley says), and it were inhuman to laugh at such an estate of misery. In the name of God then, and for the sake of your country, your immediate dependants, and yourselves, permit me to ask *you*, who occupy the first stations in society, whether it is not to be expected, that the noble provincial mansion, and its environs; whether the pleasures of the field, the library, and the garden; whether the friendly neighbour, and obliged tenant, the frequented church, and the revival of many good old usages of no *mean* ancestry; whether the encouragement of the *elegant* arts for the ornament of house and domain, and of the useful

advancement of things laudable, for the separation of these from what is blame-worthy, and for the increase of good-will among mankind. Besides to praise, is not only to *honour*, for the sake of our commended brother and the public good, but is the act which regarding the

useful ones (chiefly that of agriculture for the public good) and of others for the special prosperity of your respective districts, and all this amid the solace of a *pure* air, and the spectacles of rural beauty in *God's world* (where with God ye may commune with more advantage before ye *depart hence, and are no more seen*) ; I pray you let me seriously ask you, whether these objects and these engagements do not promise you more good, moral, intellectual, and corporeal, than is the lot of those who now fritter away their best faculties and hopes in a scene, whose aggregated follies and vices constitute indeed a *portentous monster*. For has not the like (when it arrives at its *Babylonian* plenitude, *laboratque magnitudine sua*) always occasioned the downfall of the most famous empires—by *inventing, fostering, and disseminating* that multiform unrighteousness which eats away the base of all secular greatness ?!

Respecting the danger of commerce to the morals of mankind, Solomon, by what he says of a time for all things, *insinuates*, what Aristotle *asserts*, and a greater than either *decrees*, that virtue consists in mediocrity, that *moderation should be shewn in all things*, or that well-instructed Reason should rule us. I have always thought that narrow views of things have been the bane of man, by begetting prejudice, which is only not his characteristic, and is as often the badge of his disgrace, as the crown of his glory. For instance, trade and
gentry

the bright side of things throws our thoughts upon pleasing objects, and tends to our *personal* contentment.

It has been elegantly said by a sagacious writer of antiquity, that the love of praise is the last garment of mind which we lay aside ;
but

gentry are apt to despise each other ; but all was not well, when all was gentry : and it is equally true, that meanness will mark that age in which trade predominates.—It is obvious against which excess we are now to guard, and equally so, that in these enlightened times the due medium is chiefly to be obtained by the conduct of the first orders in society, who may, methinks, if they please, prevent all the ill effects of trade upon the public manners, and yet at the same time encourage and improve it, give it a more beneficent direction, and adorn it with a superior dignity. I only mean to deliver my conceptions with *sincerity*, but not with *confidence* : an erroneous zeal, if benignant, admits of pardon.—First then let the gentleman not set up a trade himself, or exhibit the caricature of a trade, I mean by gaming, or the factious sale of his honour ; let him not discourage trade by non-payment, or thereby the chief sinew of trade, an honourable credit ; let him borrow none of his prejudices, and manners, and diction from trade, but stand apart from it by the first forms of gentleness, courtesy, generosity, honour and courage ; let the leisure which is most at his command as to time and improvement, be devoted to such researches as may result in the invention or improvement of arts and sciences, as genius respectively leads and property enables : the *improvement* of trade is the consequence. Let the gentleman concentrate his expenditure on things honest, on the products of real elegance and ingenuity, and like another

but I think it can never be laid aside, till the milk of human sociableness is wrung out of the human heart by the iron hand of cold and decrepit misanthropy. It has been also said in a later age by the sublimest of the poetical sages, that it is the last infirmity of the noble mind.

ther Socrates, turn the painter and the poet into the preachers of wisdom and virtue. The consequence is a superior *direction* and a new *dignity* to trade. And if the gentleman only *occasionally* repairs to the metropolitick hive (not upon the plan of the wasp, to rob and live in sloth, but to import, when duty calls, the treasures of wisdom and virtue which he has gathered in the gardens of retirement, and there joins the *busy hum* of *useful men*, and not the *wassailing* gambols of idle spendthrifts) we suppose him, *upon the whole*, the dignified resident in the place where his manners are exemplary, and in fact, exemplary for the first forms of virtue which can adorn human nature.† Trade of course polishes at the spectacle, and her towns emulate the generosity and hospitality, the honourable oeconomy, and liberal, but fervent piety, which adorn the country; selfishness falters, and gives way to public spirit; sordid habits, to such as are elegant and ingenuous; cleanliness introduces salubrity, and improved wisdom with public spirit, a commendable magnificence; every place will then stand upon its own dignity, and blend an honest partiality with

† The merchant-ship in its solitary course on the sea, with all its sails expanded, is a noble spectacle; but what is it when its sails are furled, and it is tied, with a hundred others, and stands with the stability of a house in the port of London?

mind. It seems then, that the mind *ought* to lay it aside, and thereby will act *nobly*: what—by laying aside that amiable reference of one's self to others, which must probably be resumed again in heaven? for think ye, that when the blessed companies there are
pausing

the love of the nation at large;—then dies the power of tyrannic fashion, which chills wisdom into folly, and inflames folly into vice; original genius comes into play; philanthropy increases, and poverty is prevented, or courteously relieved; the shopman will then blush at fraud, the manufacturer become the father of his workmen, and the merchant the means of a liberal intercourse between all the nations of the earth; in short, every town will become as a magnificent castle of the first feudal barons, but more adorned, and with an ampler and happier family, in which genuine piety will shew a sweeter way to heaven, and superior arts and sciences will adorn the terrestrial habitation—and with this difference too, that the tempers and instruments of war will be improved into those of peace, without any diminution of human dignity, and with the utmost improvement of human felicity.

But if these ideas are something more than the flourishings of ungrounded fancy, and image something of what christianity aims to produce, let the higher orders of mankind be aware that if they do not thus *honour all men*, and in time counteract the growing evils of the day, money anon will become all in all, and rather than *manners* (according to the vulgar saying, and *sentiment* too) *make the man*, and unmake the nation thus *unmanned*, or all ancient history is a fiction, the sages of antiquity

pausing from their hosannas to the Highest, that they will not express their mutual love by mutual commendations? Praise is the language of the purest love, and the fairest nurse of the most perfect virtue; let then your brother on earth be enriched by you with this proof of love, and this incentive to virtue. Fear not a degradation of your own character from the charge of flattery, as long as you are conscious of being above the *practice*; mistake not your own ill-humour or envy for modesty; nor sacrifice to your own pride a conduct which will be delightful to yourself, and useful to others: study indeed *how* and when to praise; but cultivate the *practice* for

quity but childish babblers, and the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, a crew of impostors.

Non nobis nati sumus.

Cicero.

Cum igitur illi qui rempub. administrant, suis virtutibus ac exemplis prodesse possint quam plurimis, secus autem plurimos offendere, multo magis quam privatis hominibus disciplina morum ipsis excolenda fuerit; quamvis enim unusquisque nostrum non sibi tantum, sed patriæ et reipublicæ natus est, in primis tamen magistratus omnium communi saluti prospicere debet, ac divinam puritatem, inq. cæteros homines benignitatem imitari.

Epistola nuncupatoria Gesneri de Stobœi communibus locis.

its

its cheering and humanizing effect in society. The contrary conduct is apt to do much harm. Censure damps and irritates. God says to man, *judge not*; and art not thou, being *man*, ill qualified to judge? Evidence of facts themselves is not easily had, but still less so of their qualifying circumstances; rumours usually are either falsehoods, or aggravated truths; and a sinful being should not forget that awful day, when only to the merciful, mercy shall be shewn.

As for our inferiors in any thing, be it wealth, or birth, or station, or virtue, or the faculties of the mind, let us be religiously cautious *not to despise one of these little ones*, not to depress with contempt the heart which (it may be) is already over burthened, or to create by our contempt, a burthen of which it was not till then conscious. We may have a right to command, and therefore to obedience; to instruct, and therefore to docible attention; to censure and to punish, and therefore to a modest and penitent submission; but we cannot possibly have any right, in any instance, to be haughty, insolent, and tyrannical.

After

After all, let it be remembered, that the more a man is exalted above others by divine and human favour, the more he ought to be humbled *in heart* before God and man; for he may, *perhaps*, stand in the place of his betters, and he has *certainly* drawn a *rare* prize in the lottery of life. Therefore this lowliness of mind is a just sentiment, and is usually repaid by additional honours: it is the conduct of genuine piety and benevolence, it is the gentleness of the well-educated man, it is the wisdom of the comprehensive mind, it is the address of the prudent, it is the generosity of the heroic, and it is the sublime moderation of the christian; it expresses an amiable temper, that just diffidence which every man ought to have of himself, and that soundness of understanding which is conversant with the best means of giving the best effects to the best powers; it includes the graces of the *heart*, and these usually branch out into a far superior form of behaviour, than what is the product of courtly refinement which, while it faintly mimics it, lets slip its inimitable outline of simplicity and warm glow of benevolence: in short, it is that self-originating

greatness, founded in the love of God and man, and the due valuation of time and eternity, which is superior to every dignity but what the King of Kings himself bestows. It is therefore to be admired as the truest magnanimity, and to be beloved as the most genuine benevolence; the characters most popular and useful on earth are of this description, and one may confidently say, that in heaven the angels themselves will embrace him who on earth has most practised their manners. Till the nature of true greatness (which is *virtue*) is thoroughly understood, and this dignity is chiefly pursued, this life will *continue* to be a disorderly field for all the rabble-contests of selfishness, for an endless warfare amidst the mists of suspicions and anxiety, and beneath the clouds of contentious, intriguing, and mysterious policies; but it will be no longer such when we really *honour all men*. A fair order will then succeed to confusion and deformity, suspicion and a painful solicitude will be cleared away from the atmosphere of life, and the sunshine of universal benevolence will exhibit and increase all its delights and its beauty. The *public good* then commences the dearest

dearest object of every individual, and each cultivating his own powers for the purpose of advancing it, is ardent to encourage the different faculties which distinguish other men, that the whole family of human kind may be blest by the *utmost* contributions of its members. But I cannot farther pursue this light, trailing itself out in its several glories, and blazing down the sordid prejudices, rivalships, and contests which have hitherto checked the courtesies, kindnesses, and hospitalities of the human soul, and eclipsed it struggling (*at the word of Christ*) to break out into its proper lustre. That day, O ye that *honour all men* (for ye too will honour with your best wishes the generations to come), that day shall assuredly shine upon the earth, and by displaying the sublime *excellency* perfect the *evidence* of evangelical truth.—But we must not forget that one of its precepts is to *love the brotherhood*.

By the word brotherhood, the Apostle seems to have meant the society of the faithful and persecuted christians, whose virtue then more visibly merited, as their wants and perils required, all the relief which the tenderest

friendship and charity could afford them. Still however the apostolical precept will have its use, as men of the most eminent virtues and faculties are still exposed to some degree of persecution; they are persecuted by the proud and the ignorant, by the votaries of secular ambition, avarice, and sensuality, by the indolent, the pusillanimous, and the narrow minded; their attention to *everlasting* proprieties is misconstrued by the slaves of the reigning fashions, nor will the consistency of their conduct, though thus modelled after the purest virtue upon record, though founded upon the most comprehensive view of the public good, though originating in the noblest principles, and issuing in the best fruits, be seen by prevailing envy, by mortified pride, and by incensed meanness—till the tear of tender recollection is mingled with their ashes, and the useless eulogy is inscribed upon their urns. This is reason enough that the truly-virtuous should unite, patronize, and *avow* each other. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*—the jewel truth is to be picked up even from a dunghill.—Let us then imitate the worthless, who can unite to serve their common cause; faction

faction has her banditti, and impiety her phalanx ; and thus let the eminently good be embodied, and let them come forwards, a resistless host, beneath the banners of the Lord of Hosts : they can be inspired by no better cause, and they want no other leader than the great Captain of Salvation, than the Son of God, whose standard they will fear to desert, if they fear God *himself*.

Did this principle really exist in the hearts of all men in the degree which it ought to do, if man is a rational being, has the power of forethought, and believes that all men shall die as to this world, and yet live again as to all eternity—it were a principle strong enough, if any thing called principle can be, to prostrate all men into the most absolute obedience, and all possible conformity to the divine will. We are so connected with God, that, comparatively speaking, we are connected with no other being ; and balanced against our eternal interests, our temporal are as nothing. All depends upon God, who was, is, and shall be. How can we know these things, and not fear Him ? but how can we fear Him, and not obey Him ? Is it a foundation

of perpetual pleasure, is it an argument of a *great* soul not to fear God? Is it fit that this fear, is it reasonable that piety, should be the royal law, the governing principle of mankind? That it should be, and of course *appear* such, more especially by its most visible sign, by the public worship of God? Can we possibly conceive any act of madness so *mad*, any act of ingratitude so *ungrateful*, any act of sin so *sinful*, as the one comprehensive and flagitious crime of impiety, as the creature's denial of the Creator, which is done the most formally, and the most flagrantly when his public worship is the most neglected by them who enjoy the largest abundance of his loving kindneses? Yet has man now received a new charter from the King of Kings to protect him from the encroachments of adversity, or the tyranny of death? Doth he now possess some new power to guard his mind from madness, his heart from sorrow, and his body from pain and disease? Glance a thought upon the tombstones of the great, upon the ruins of the mightiest empires, upon the present perilous pitiable state of some, upon the lapse of time, upon your own gradual

dual advancement towards death, and the still abiding frailties of dependant, perishable man, and then answer to your souls whether still the Holy One—the Eternal—the only Omnipotent—whether God is not *greatly* to be feared. Let us then so fear God as to overcome the seductive world, and bar up that only entrance to false fleeting joys and real miseries; and let us so *love* God with all our hearts, and souls, and strength, as, *at length*, to open all the springs of the most pure and genuine, ever-flowing, ever-varying, ever-increasing felicity.

Lastly, let us *honour the king*, the supreme magistrate, the laws of our country, the good order of society, or those authoritative instructions for civil converse, which, in union with religious principles and doctrines, include all those directions and motives for right behaviour which at once strengthen and beautify the great arch of society, and enable the individual by guards from without and from within, by respecting his conscience as well as external behaviour, to cultivate that one perfect conduct, that christian godliness which is most *profitable in things temporal as well as eternal.*

eternal. This should be our conduct would we duly honour *ourselves*; and would we duly honour *the king*—we shall not be merely satisfied with the most genuine proofs of national affection towards him, but we shall study to give the best and wisest proofs of it, by such a virtuous and religious conduct as may draw down the divine blessings upon his people: this is the best way to strengthen his government, to exalt it in genuine glory, and I leave it to you to add whether it will not be the best way of pleasing *him*.

In a few words, and to conclude—it is the first duty of man to fear the King of Kings; for where genuine piety flourishes it is a principle mighty enough to smite, and wither to the root, all those immoderate affections towards this world, whence its principal vanities and evils arise. Human nature is then at liberty to spread forth into its fairest forms, to blossom in its most beautiful colours, and to bear its best fruit. Then at length life will be governed by the wisdom of the *serpent*, and dignified and enjoyed with the innocence of the *dove*; Prudence and Simplicity, Justice and Mercy, will at last *kiss* each other;
Selfishness

Selfishness and all its wretched arts will no more deform the honour of the *individual*, or debase the grandeur of *national* policy; reason then will rule the passions, their master indeed, but not their tyrant, and the director of nature, and not its destroyer; the fear and the love of God will be a resistless tide to bear the will of man into the divine will; preparations will be made for a blissful eternity; and the *human* character will, with all the efforts of the only ambition worthy *man*, be more and more fashioned after the *angelic*.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



